



Kurt Weill: the 'composer as dramatist' in American musical theatre production

Whitfield, Sarah

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Kurt Weill:

The 'Composer as Dramatist' in American Musical Theatre Production

Sarah Whitfield
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Queen Mary, University of London

ABSTRACT:

The aim of this thesis is to critically examine Weill's negotiation of American cultural industries and his collaborative practice in making musicals there. It addresses the influence of the earlier, now discredited, concept of 'Two Weills', which has engendered an emphasis on identity within the current literature. It proposes that Weill scholarship has been further constrained by problematic perceptions of Weill's position as both a European modernist composer and an exile in America. Each of these contexts suggests romanticised notions of appropriate behaviour, for a composer, and of autonomy and separation from popular culture. This thesis examines how Weill troubles those notions by engaging with the musical, a so-called 'middlebrow' form, with a disputed cultural value. It traces the reconsideration of the musical as a location for sociocultural analysis, highlighting David Savran's requirement that approaches to the musical recognise the form's material conditions of production. The thesis establishes its methodology built on Ric Knowles's cultural materialist approach to contemporary performance. This enables Weill's activities to be seen in their proper context: Weill's negotiation of entry into American art worlds, and the subsequent exchange of economic assets and Weill's active management of his cultural capital through the media are followed for the first time, clearly revealing the composer's working practices. The thesis suggests that Weill is a practitioner who consciously engages with American cultural industries. It addresses questions of authorship, demonstrating how Weill's contribution can be understood within complex sets of agencies. It establishes how Weill can be seen through his own model of the 'composer as dramatist' and through Adorno's depiction of the composer as a *Musikregisseur*.

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INTRODUCTION

At the state opening of the new German parliament on 21 March 1933, after winning the nominally democratic election earlier that month, Chancellor Adolf Hitler staged an elaborate ceremony in order to portray the unification of his party's political strength with Prussian military power. On the very same day, Kurt Weill, who had been waiting to see how events unfolded, left Germany, sensing that he could no longer risk remaining.

After brief sojourns in Paris and London, Weill travelled to New York in September 1935 for the upcoming production of what became *The Eternal Road*. This spectacular pageant about the history of the Jewish people was to be directed by Max Reinhardt, and as the ambitious production costs spiralled, the production company behind it was declared bankrupt. Though the project was put on hold for the foreseeable future, Weill decided to remain in New York, where he had met producer Cheryl Crawford. The following year he worked with her and the Group Theatre on the musical *Johnny Johnson*. During rehearsals, Weill gave a lecture on the subject 'What is Musical Theatre?' to the Group. Weill's notes for the lecture survive and as they were written shortly after his arrival, they reflect his first observations of the state of musical theatre and the possibilities for how a composer might operate within the American musical theatre industry:

Situation of musical theatre in this country: metropolitan [*sic*], worst example of old fashioned opera museum on the one side, musical comedy, which tried to be sophisticated and low brow at the same time, on the other side. Nothing between. Enormous fields for a musical theatre. Collaboration of playwrights and composer. Composer as dramatist (Mozart, Verdi, Wagner).¹

Weill's suggestion of the 'composer as dramatist' was the starting point for this thesis. In the summer of 2005, as part of my Masters degree, I visited the Kurt Weill Foundation archives to research one of Weill's last major collaborations, *Love Life*. During this time, I came across his notes for this

¹ New York, Weill Lenya Research Centre, Photocopy, TS with MS additions, Kurt Weill, *Notes for lecture to Group Theatre: 'What is Musical Theatre?'* 27 July 1936.

lecture, and long after I had completed my dissertation something about Weill's turn of phrase stayed with me. It suggested that there might be a viable way to consider Weill's collaborations that would utilise my own experience as a dramaturg rather than a musicologist.

In the planning stages of this thesis, I intended to engage in a survey which would cover all of Weill's musicals in the USA, focusing on each of his collaborations in turn. I hoped that this would establish a comprehensive overview of Weill's career from his arrival in 1935 to his death in 1950. However, as I recognised the obstacles that had constrained scholarship around Weill and the musical as a form, it became apparent that relying on a chronologically based outline was not only unfeasible but entirely inappropriate to a critical study. I began to address the reasons behind Weill's disputed reputation, something which had been attributed to his activities in the USA. The established narrative of the composer's career was for many years based on the idea that there were 'Two Weills' (the theory being that there was a German and an American Weill, and both are entirely separate from one another). Though this theory's dominance has diminished in the literature, it has left lingering questions about Weill's identity and doubts over the appropriateness of the composer's actions in exile. It was also clear that the romanticised version of the autonomous composer and the artist, which had necessitated the 'Two Weills' in the first place, had been itself immensely damaging to Weill studies. To have emphasised chronology, as I had originally planned, would have implied a progressive narrative: something inherently tangled up with the mythologised concepts around the composer that I had already recognised as damaging.

Having realised this, I began to appreciate the immense significance of Weill's description of the 'composer as dramatist' in illuminating his own working practice. The idea represents the radical repositioning and unmasking of the activity of the composer within collaborative production methods in Weill's career. I shifted my focus to addressing this further, and it soon became the foundation for this work. The aim of this thesis is then to critically examine Weill's negotiation of American cultural industries and his collaborative practice in making musicals there. In order to do this, it is necessary to

consider contextual aspects that have shaped or constrained the way in which both Weill and the products of his collaborations have been received. Though I am unwilling to perpetuate the discussion of 'Two Weills' or the disputed value of the musical any further, addressing the lingering influences of these concepts and the recent revisionist responses they have provoked is necessary preparatory work for the kind of analysis I wish to carry out.

Firstly, Weill engaged with the musical, a form which has troubled academics because of its popularity, commerciality and essentially middlebrow cultural status. In this Introduction, I will review recent developments in the field, considering particularly those responses which seek to move away from traditional concepts of the musical's position in imaginary hierarchies of genre. Secondly, it is necessary to address Weill's status as a European classical composer, and I will explore this in Chapter 1. I will consider the various kinds of mythology that Weill has been the unwitting beneficiary of, with particular regards to the 'Two Weills' model, which has been applied to explain or even to pardon his actions in exile. Though, as I suggested, this concept has been discredited, its full influence has not yet been properly addressed. I want to propose that there is a more useful and accurate mode of thinking about Weill that relies on his own concept of the 'composer as dramatist'. Thirdly, Weill's position as an exile has had particular implications; for example concepts of artistic or intellectual exile as fundamentally different and more extreme than any other kind of exile. Weill's experience subverts the dominant narrative of artistic exile from Germany to the U.S. in the 1930s and 1940s as one of separation and isolation from the host culture. I will consider these issues in Chapter 2, alongside questions of how Weill's experiences challenge theoretical conceptions of exile, ideas formalised by Theodor Adorno and Edward Said. As a consequence of such theories, Weill's commitment to popular culture and patriotism to his new home country is seen as downright embarrassing and inappropriate.

In this Introduction, I will establish a methodology with which to approach Weill's collaborative work in the USA. My focus is specifically on the musical theatre production Weill was involved in, referring only to his collaborations

in other fields in the cultural industries as context. I am chiefly concerned with the collaborative processes through which the performance text of the musical is established and received. The musical's highly collaborative method of production troubles notions of artistic ownership and the centrality of the creative author figure. I want to address how, if at all, the literature in this area has addressed the musical's unique production process. Having done this, I will establish a methodological framework which will facilitate my approach to Weill's collaborative practice.

HOW DO YOU SOLVE A PROBLEM LIKE THE MUSICAL?

Over the last twenty years, in an attempt to put questions of whether the form is a legitimate area of academic study behind it, musical theatre scholarship has valiantly engaged in a struggle to defend its own existence. Despite the growing importance placed on considering popular culture in academia, a survey of the recent literature leads to the disheartening conclusion that some still feel there is a need to defend the musical. Throughout the musical's past, various tactics have been used in attempts to legitimise the form within academic study and highbrow culture. I want to outline these approaches here: firstly, the musical's established historiography, which presents the apparent evolution of the integrated musical; secondly, the formation and continuation of canons which group the most 'art-like' musicals together as those which can be considered 'proper' art music or legitimate theatre; and thirdly, attempts at genealogy which have linked the musical to more culturally acceptable high-art forms such as opera and operetta, and credited the form with European parentage. I will examine this process in light of Barbara Herrnstein Smith's work on value, and consider her suggestion that 'what are commonly taken to be the signs of literary value are, in effect, its springs', in reference to the musical.²

I want to propose that many of the attempts to establish the musical as an appropriate area for study have been *as* damaging to the form's reception as any traditional dismissal. The efforts of apologists in trying to reveal an

² Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 52.

inherent value in some musicals (but not others), or in attempting to establish an appropriate lineage for the form's origins, have produced a self-perpetuating need to further justify the object of study. New discussion has been delayed by this relentless requirement (with some notable recent exceptions, to which I will shortly return). Even more problematically, many of these efforts to raise the standing of the musical have actually denied its fundamental characteristics, not least of which, its inherently collaborative nature. I want to examine how the defence of the musical has operated, and the product of this apologetic position, the dominant progress narrative in the form's historiography and the resultant masking of labour in its method of production.

'WE'VE GONE ABOUT AS FAR AS WE CAN GO': THE MUSICAL'S HISTORIOGRAPHY

THE *OKLAHOMA!* NARRATIVE

The somewhat hackneyed account of the musical's apparent systematic evolution has been the cornerstone of much of the popular literature in the field. The story begins with *The Black Crook* (1866), normally considered the first American musical, continuing into the early twentieth century and the so-called Princess Theatre musicals (1910s) and the potential of *Showboat* (1927), until the integrated triumph of *Oklahoma!* (1943) is eventually reached. The language around this narrative relies on ideas of maturity, seriousness and appropriateness – the musical is seen to be slowly becoming more 'valuable'. Andrew Lamb, author of *150 Years of Popular Musical Theatre*, notes that *Showboat* was 'a precursor of the integrated, more serious Broadway musical'.³ David Ewen goes much further and argues that in the piece, lyricist Oscar Hammerstein 'transcends the techniques and skills of his trade to arrive at the higher purposes [...] of a true poet.'⁴ Lehman Engel suggests that musicals, and by apparent extension the USA, had by the 1940s 'graduated into a more

³ Andrew Lamb, *150 Years of Popular Musical Theatre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 174.

⁴ David Ewen, *The Story of America's Musical Theater* (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1968), p. 162.

highly sophisticated state'.⁵ These ideas fit into a wider concept of progression which is even present in academic publishing; Paul Filmer suggests that *Oklahoma!* is 'an artistic milestone in the development of the musical theatre genre, forging its musical and dramatic structure into a new form.'⁶ Ewen even attributes the death of Richard Rodgers's erstwhile collaborator Lorenz Hart 'in all probability [to] the knowledge that *Oklahoma!* had finally accomplished what he had been reaching for all his life', that is to say the integrated musical.⁷ (The pneumonia, one can only assume, had nothing to do with it.)

The idea of integration and its corollary narratives of value and cultural legitimisation have formed the basis of the musical's historiography. Dominic Symonds and Dan Rebellato note: 'musical theatre is a form that has largely been defined by those narratives - the musical as an American art-form; its divergence from opera; its historical evolution towards integration.'⁸ Such assumptions have been addressed; materialist historian David Savran denounces the integration myth as a 'worn, unsubstantiated — and inaccurate — assertion that *Oklahoma!* signalled a paradigm shift insofar as it represented the first "fully integrated" musical.'⁹ He argues that the resulting relegation of any musical before *Oklahoma!* 'to the Dark Ages is deeply problematic'.¹⁰ The integration narrative has been used to demonstrate the comparable value of the musical with its "neighbour" in music theatre, the opera; projecting the apparent value of the integrated musical in order to find a place for it within hierarchies of genre. It conveniently formalised a way in which the musical could be judged as art, removing the connection to commerciality from the form's historiography. 'There are clear perils in

⁵ Lehman Engel, *Words with Music: Creating the Broadway Musical Libretto* rev. by Howard Kissel, (New York: Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 2006), p. 5.

⁶ Paul Filmer, Val Rimmer and Dave Walsh, 'Oklahoma!: Ideology and Politics in the Vernacular Tradition of the American Musical', *Popular Music*, 18 (1999), 381-395 (p. 382).

⁷ Ewen, *America's Musical Theatre*, p. 184.

⁸ Dominic Symonds and Dan Rebellato, 'Editorial', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 19.1 (2009), 3-7 (p. 5).

⁹ David Savran, 'Toward a Historiography of the Popular', *Theatre Survey*, 45.2 (2004), 211-217 (p. 213).

¹⁰ Savran, 'Historiography', (p. 214).

relying on an apparent teleological narrative which has been constructed in order to prove the apparent value of the form; most obviously any one musical is no longer considered in its own context, and becomes a stepping stone on the way to the integrated and finished product (and post-1943, as a reaction to or against it). The attribution of value on a sliding scale based on the degree of integration, suggests a desired connection between the integrated musical and the form of music theatre which is perceived to have the most cultural value – opera.

In his critical study of *Oklahoma!*, Tim Carter reconsiders its collaborative production method and the subsequent mythologies it has generated. He reports that the debate around its cultural value had originated soon after opening night:

By the mid-1940s, various issues concerning *Oklahoma!* began to enter the discourse even of relatively ‘highbrow’ critics concerned with the theatre. One was whether *Oklahoma!* somehow contributed to the emergence of the contemporary ‘American’ art form that could vie on equal terms with such European imports as ‘serious’ spoken drama on the one hand, and opera on the other.¹¹

This dialogue persisted and was formalised into the dominant account of the musical’s development. There are obvious problems with *Oklahoma!*’s designation as the point of transformation, not least of which is the questionable status of its own dramatic integration as an individual work. More troubling is the way in which this account necessarily denies the musical’s production process. The emphasis on creativity and artistic legitimacy relies on the inspiration of named author/creator figures, minimising the collaboration process through which the musical is developed.

The stakes are plain: if the musical is art not craft, it is inherently both more valuable and culturally appropriate. However Eric Salzman argues that ‘this standardized view of the history of musical theatre as perpetually striving toward higher ground has never succeeded in raising its perceived intellectual stature.’¹² I want to keep Salzman’s warning in mind while considering how

¹¹ Tim Carter, *Oklahoma! The Making of an American Musical* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 206.

¹² Eric Salzman, ‘Reading Musicals’, *Theater*, 33 (2003), 92-96 (pp. 92-93).

two further methods of valuation have operated: canon formation and the establishment of an appropriate pedigree.

FINDING VALUE IN THE MUSICAL

Barbara Herrnstein Smith suggests that what is labelled “art” will ‘always be drawn from the western academic canon’, and will ‘typically be attended by the tacit presumption of canonical audiences experiencing those works under canonical conditions plus the tacit exclusion of non-canonical (that is, non-Western, non-academic, nonadult or non-high-culture) audiences and non-canonical *conditions of production and reception*.’¹³ The musical defies these requirements on several levels: its collaborative commercial conditions of production, its non-high audience and its relationship to mass culture. The progressive narrative formed around the musical’s development presents the musical moving towards what Herrnstein Smith calls the properties of the Western academic canon. This is demonstrated in the rather obvious aspiration to operatic *Gesamtkunstwerk* in this system. Beyond *Oklahoma!*, the naming of the ‘more-like-opera’ musicals has taken place through the formation of an internal canon. To address this process, I want to turn to the considerable scholarship on the formation of the art music canon.¹⁴

Broadly speaking, this canon is made up of composers who are considered great, and by extension their works (the emphasis being more on composer than their individual compositions). These composers are subject to what Robert Fink describes as ‘worship’, they are the beneficiaries of ‘social mystifications’ of ‘genius, transcendence, and autonomy’.¹⁵ Music historian William Weber identifies three principle routes into this core canon: the ‘scholarly canon’, as established by the academy: the ‘pedagogical canon [...] which involved the emulation of works by master composers of a previous

¹³ Herrnstein Smith, *Value*, pp. 35-36.

¹⁴ Although art music is a problematic term, it has come to be used for Western classical music instead of high or serious music, and is marginally preferable.

¹⁵ Robert Fink, ‘Elvis Everywhere: Musicology and Popular Music Studies at the Twilight of the Canon’, *American Music*, 16 (1998), 135-179 (p. 141).

generation'; and 'the performing canon'.¹⁶ Of these he argues that 'performance is ultimately the most significant and critical aspect'.¹⁷ In more recent years, musicologists and music historians reconsidered the canon, questioning its reliance on exclusions which lead to the absence of non-western or female composers (to name two examples). However, instead of overhauling canons, or any sort of dissipation, they have actually proliferated. Fink explains this process:

No longer is there classical Music-with-a-capital-M and its "Others" (such as jazz, pop, folk); the canon of Western classical music is now just one among many, and not the most culturally prestigious anymore, at least in America. Other canons are forming busily, and other kinds of music are making credible plays for the top of the taste hierarchy.¹⁸

The use of canon as a process by which a form can be legitimised has occurred in other once-excluded genres, beyond the musical. In the case of jazz, Krin Gabbard notes alongside prizes and Pulitzer awards: 'a canon of great artists and recordings has often been cited to legitimise the claim that jazz is real art.'¹⁹ (It is worth noting that musicals, like jazz, have been awarded several Pulitzer prizes.²⁰)

The musical theatre canon is primarily conceived of as a grouping of works as opposed to a grouping of composers/writers like the classical canon. This is evident in popular publishing, for example in the many largely photographic coffee-table books on the musical, with titles that confirm an established

¹⁶ William Weber, 'The History of the Musical Canon', in *Rethinking Music*, ed. by Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 336-354 (pp. 339-340).

¹⁷ Weber, 'The History of the Musical Canon', (p. 340).

¹⁸ Fink, 'Elvis Everywhere', (p.148).

¹⁹ Krin Gabbard, 'Canon', in *Grove Music Online* <<http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?section=jazz.532800>> [accessed 28 March 2008].

²⁰ Musicals have been awarded eight prizes; *Of Thee I Sing* (1931-32), *South Pacific* (1949-50), *Fiorello!* (1959-60), *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (1975-76), *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984-85), *Rent* (1995-96), *Next to Normal* (2009-2010). 'The Pulitzer Prizes | Drama', *The Pulitzer Prizes*, 2010, <<http://www.pulitzer.org/bycat/Drama>> [accessed 3 May 2010].

group, e.g. '*Broadway Musicals: The 101 Greatest Shows of all Time*'.²¹ Lehman Engel, in his 1967 book on the musical, explicitly names his selection as a 'canon', (which is comprised of *Pal Joey*, *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Brigadoon*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *South Pacific*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The King and I*, *My Fair Lady*, and *West Side Story*).²² More recently, Stephen Banfield, a musical theatre musicologist, accepts the presence of a musical theatre canon. His only question is whether anything will be added to it, or 'whether [it] is now fixed as a twentieth-century one'.²³

As Weber suggests is the case in classical music, I would argue that the primary method of the musical's canon formation is through the repetition of performance. This repetition may originally stem from the length of its first production (and in subsequent film adaptations); indeed over time a musical's place in the canon can be secured by revivals. Herrnstein Smith notes that in the case of literature, 'the repeated inclusion of a particular work in literary anthologies not only promotes the value of that work but goes some distance toward creating its value.'²⁴ This kind of reiteration in revivals of musicals can be seen in the same light; in Engel's canon, several works were further legitimised not only through numerous new productions, but also by entering the repertoire of opera companies and subsidised theatres (for example the Royal National Theatre's productions of *Carousel* and *Oklahoma!* under the direction of Trevor Nunn). The established performance canon is confirmed and further perpetuated through publication and pedagogy.

Other attempts at legitimising the musical can be seen in attempts to link its genealogy to European opera and operetta. These tactics allow the musical to be placed in a narrative constantly guided by established and legitimate art

²¹ Ken Bloom, *Broadway Musicals: The 101 Greatest Shows of all Time* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2004).

²² Lehman Engel, *The American Musical Theater: A Consideration* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 75.

²³ Stephen Banfield, 'Popular musical theatre (and film)', in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, ed. by Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 291-305 (p. 305).

For further commentary on the resistance of canon formation in publishing about the musical see Tim Carter, 'The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey (Review)', *Music and Letters*, 85.4 (November 2004), 674-677.

²⁴ Herrnstein Smith, *Value*, p. 46.

forms. This can be found in Leonard Bernstein's 1956 television documentary, 'American Musical Comedy'. Bernstein reassured his viewer of the musical's fundamental connection to proper European art forms, albeit with a uniquely American flavour.²⁵ He suggested that the musical was evolving into a higher cultural status: 'steadily moving in the direction of opera'.²⁶ This theory of origin implies a degree of cultural imperialism in its positioning of European culture as necessarily superior to American. This is clear in the kind of language used to portray it, as in the following example from Richard Kislán:

European forms dominated musical theatre activity in colonial America. After all, the colonists inherited from England not only language and custom, but sophisticated tastes in art, architecture, the decorative arts, and theatre entertainment.²⁷

Todd Decker, in his reconsideration of *Showboat's* historiography, highlights the repercussions of this European parentage theory in its discounting of the contribution of African-American musical idioms. Decker makes a particular reference to Bernstein's TV program:

What Bernstein seems deaf to is the black element in *Show Boat*, and the Broadway musical more generally. His review of Broadway history omits black-cast musicals and black performers entirely, and at no point does popular music history interrupt the hermetically sealed artistic development of 'American musical comedy' towards something that can be called operatic.²⁸

Bernstein's continuation of the legitimate ancestry discourse also suggests the desire for artistic respectability on the part of practitioners themselves.

As both Decker and Carter demonstrate, major reconsiderations of established narratives and their repercussions are taking place, and I will return to them shortly. Nonetheless, contemporary attempts to authenticate the musical as a valid object of study can easily be found. Such ideas still appear in one of the most recent major contributions to the field, a 2009 special issue of

²⁵ Leonard Bernstein, 'American Musical Comedy: broadcast on 7 October 1956' in Leonard Bernstein, *The Joy of Music* (London: Panther Books, 1969), pp. 157-184 (p. 183).

²⁶ Bernstein, 'American Musical Comedy', (p. 183).

²⁷ Richard Kislán, *The Musical: A Look at The American Musical Theatre* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980), p. 11.

²⁸ Todd Decker, "Do you want to hear a Mammy song?": A Historiography of *Show Boat*, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 19.1 (2009), 8-21 (p. 12).

Contemporary Theatre Review. In one article, Bernstein's contribution is praised because it 'demonstrates that musical theatre can aspire to – and achieve – parity with the oldest and the highest art forms.'²⁹ Publishing around Stephen Sondheim over the last twenty years has reflected similar ideas of artistic integrity. Sondheim's artistic credentials seem somehow to be bettered by the perception that his work has not been commercially successful. Joanne Gordon, for instance, implies that his works are exceptions that deserve serious consideration *in spite* of being musicals: 'commercial and aesthetic criteria should not be confused, however. Sondheim explores new territory every time he writes a new musical. This does not lead to automatic acclaim and financial success; Sondheim's triumphs are of a different order.'³⁰ The basic principle that Sondheim's musicals are inherently more valuable because they are *not commercial* reveals a material basis for these value judgements. Where the defence of integration cannot be used (and Sondheim is a good example of this), the designation of non-commercial carries a certain amount of protection against claims of disputed integrity. If it did not make money, it *must* have been art.

The practice of validating the musical through the process of including or excluding good or bad examples from a legitimate canon can be found in academic literature. John Bush Jones's recent attempt to document a 'social history of the musical stage', relies on just such a distinction.³¹ He imposes a division between those musicals which 'sought not just to entertain but also to advocate a point of view or hoped to move the audience to see things their way' and what he calls 'diversionary musicals'.³² Those in the latter category are included in appendices detailing 'long-running diversionary musicals' from 1929 to 2000.³³ They include musicals like *Guys and Dolls*, *Grease*, *The Wiz*, *Miss Saigon*, and *Victor/Victoria*. Bush Jones suggests that if nothing else, 'these

²⁹ Paul Nash, 'The most beautiful sound I ever heard': Liturgy, Religious Imagery and Symbolism in *West Side Story*', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 19.1 (2009), 87-100 (p. 100).

³⁰ Joanne Gordon, *Art Isn't Easy: The Achievement of Stephen Sondheim* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), p. 3.

³¹ John Bush Jones, *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theatre* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2004), p. 1.

³² Bush Jones, *Our Musicals*, p. 1.

³³ Bush Jones, *Our Musicals*, pp. 362-373.

[diversionary shows] are important, if only to raise the question of why certain decades delivered more “mindless fluff” than others’.³⁴ It hardly needs saying that within his schematic, diversionary shows are ostensibly less valuable than other musicals.

MIDDLEBROW ANXIETY

David Savran has examined what exactly about the musical is so problematic to academic study. He identifies that ‘musical theatre since the 1920s has epitomized middlebrow culture, the most loathed category for those with the leisure and ambition to map American cultural production.’³⁵ In the first chapter of his book *A Queer Sort of Materialism*, Savran considers the concept of middlebrow at length, dating its origin as a distinct cultural genre to the 1950s.³⁶ He traces the parallel development of ‘highbrow’ culture, addressing ‘its ability to function as a signifier of cultural purity, consecration, and asceticism.’³⁷ He observes that during the 1950s ‘all the attacks on middlebrow culture imagine it to be a feminised and/or homosexualised product’ (an observation which has a particular resonance for the musical).³⁸ He explains the response of mid-century theorists:

Middlebrow culture represents first and foremost a scandalous interpenetration of high and low. Combining opposites, it blurs boundaries or - worse yet - obliterates them entirely. A virulent form of cultural miscegenation, it brings together those things (and presumably persons) that should be kept separate.³⁹

Savran is concerned with the location of American commercial theatre as a whole as an intrinsically middlebrow form. He argues that ‘the very structure of theatre’s system of production, distribution, and consumption [...] would

³⁴ Bush Jones, *Our Musicals*, p. 1.

³⁵ Savran, ‘Historiography’, (p. 216).

³⁶ He notes that the word itself dates from the 1920s, but was used to delineate levels of culture from the 1950s onwards. David Savran, *A Queer Sort of Materialism: Recontextualizing American Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2003), pp. 3-4.

³⁷ Savran, *Materialism*, p. 5.

³⁸ Savran, *Materialism*, p. 6.

³⁹ Savran here is specifically referring to Dwight MacDonald. Savran, *Materialism*, p. 8.

seem to guarantee its middlebrow status in perpetuity.⁴⁰ This status is ensured by theatre's intrinsic relationship to 'cultural miscegenation'.⁴¹ He proposes that 'for virtually the entire twentieth century, theatre occupied [...] an intermediate position in US culture', going on to suggest that the 'recycling and recombining' of elements from both popular entertainment and serious art render theatre necessarily 'both high and low at the same time'.⁴²

Savran traces the cultural positioning of American theatre through the twentieth century. He examines those musicals which have won Pulitzer Prizes, identifying that these works 'are the most skilful [...] at arousing the critical disdain and anxiety so strongly linked to middlebrow culture'.⁴³ He examines the kind of interpenetrations that occur in *South Pacific* and *Rent*, both Pulitzer Prize winners: 'both plays recycle musical and dramatic traits associated with opera and combine them with the pop vernaculars of their day'.⁴⁴ He concludes with the thought that:

Perhaps a revived musical theatre that is both commercially viable and aesthetically and politically bold will find a way not of denying or renouncing theatre's long-term middlebrow position in the cultural hierarchy but of exploiting it and discovering a new vibrancy in the unpredictable intercourse of high and low.⁴⁵

Though this offers a solution for the form's own precarious position between high and middlebrow culture, the question remains – how should academic approaches such as mine proceed? Simon Frith, who has carried out a comparable recovery of popular music from the academic wilderness, makes a radical suggestion for any attempt to move beyond value judgements. He demonstrates the need for a materialist approach after genre hierarchies have been abandoned:

I believe that we should begin from the principle that there is no difference between high and low culture, and then see how, nevertheless, such a difference has become a social fact (the result of specific historical and social and institutional practices.) [...] I would

⁴⁰ Savran, *Materialism*, p. 15.

⁴¹ Savran, *Materialism*, p. 8.

⁴² Savran, *Materialism*, p. 15.

⁴³ Savran, *Materialism*, p. 27.

⁴⁴ Savran, *Materialism*, p. 28.

⁴⁵ Savran, *Materialism*, p. 55.

argue, at least as a starting premise, that in responding to high and low art forms, in assessing them, finding them beautiful or moving or repulsive, people are employing the same evaluative principles. The differences lie in the objects at issue (what is culturally interesting to us is socially structured), in the discourses in which judgements are cast, and in the circumstances in which they are made.⁴⁶

Using this emphasis on the circumstances in which popular culture is made, I want to turn back to Savran's work and clarify the requirements he lays out for any methodology which examines the musical's method of production.

'TOWARDS A HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE POPULAR'

In 2004, David Savran presented an outline of a possible approach for studying musicals. He explains the discomfort academics have felt with such a populist form, noting that 'modern theatre historians [...] tend to dismiss twentieth-century theatre that lacks an obviously modernist pedigree, aims chiefly to produce pleasure, and remains too scandalously intimate with mass culture.'⁴⁷ He reviews the field, noting the possibilities for a new scholarship that have already appeared:

The methodologies of the few consequential works about American musical theatre suggest that the undeniable popularity of the form requires even the most theoretical interventions to bow to the exigencies of production and consumption.⁴⁸

Robert Lawson-Peebles concurs, arguing that the disdain for the musical is intrinsically linked to notions of 'aesthetic autonomy' which separated 'arts from their apparently humbler relation, the crafts and developed into the belief that they inhabited a superior realm, transcending the axes of time and space.'⁴⁹ Savran proposes that academics let go of any aversions to production conditions, and instead embrace them as a framework through which to study the musical.

⁴⁶ Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 18-19.

⁴⁷ Savran, 'Historiography', (p. 212).

⁴⁸ Savran, 'Historiography', (p. 213).

⁴⁹ Robert Lawson-Peebles, 'Introduction: Cultural Musicology and the American Musical' in *Approaches to the American Musical*, ed. by Robert Lawson-Peebles (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), pp. 1-18 (p. 6).

Savran then lays out the challenges facing such an approach. Firstly, he raises the 'questions of interdisciplinarity' the musical presents.⁵⁰ As it is a collaborative form, studying the musical requires 'an implicit or explicit theorization of multiple (and often conflicting) systems of signification as well as at least passing familiarity with musicology and dance scholarship.'⁵¹ Secondly, he notes the problem of genre, as 'no theatre form is as expansive and difficult to categorize generically'.⁵² Thirdly, Savran addresses the 'politics of pleasure'; the musical is devoted to producing pleasure in its audience.⁵³ I would suggest that this is especially problematic for academics who wish to present their own work as part of a wider process of cultural demystification. Savran would surely agree that the musical is not a form that tends to demystify, and can be strongly utopian in its presentation of the world, as he notes: 'This utopian dimension of the musical [...] makes it into a kind of hothouse for the manufacture of theatrical seduction and the ideological positions to which mass audiences can be seduced.'⁵⁴ Savran also raises identity politics and the role of 'marginalized social groups' in consolidating the musical as a form (specifically queer, Jewish and African-American minority groups).⁵⁵ He points out that 'several of the most valuable recent books in the field have focused on the production (and consumption) of the Broadway musical by these subcultures.'⁵⁶ Finally, he argues that the frequent dismissal of the form suggests that 'American musical theatre offers an important site for an analysis of antitheatricity'.⁵⁷

In summary, Savran argues that academics should turn their attention to the musical, a form which represents the main theatre-going experience for the

⁵⁰ Savran, 'Historiography', (p. 215).

⁵¹ Savran, 'Historiography', (p. 216).

⁵² Savran, 'Historiography', (p. 216).

⁵³ Dan Rebellato in his analysis of the politics of pleasure (with particular reference to *Kiss Me Kate*) makes the argument that the 'musical's libidinal pleasures' are potentially 'the site for a revisionist assessment of its politics.' Dan Rebellato, "'No Theatre Guild Attraction Are We': Kiss Me, Kate and the Politics of the Integrated Musical', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 19.1 (2009), 61-73 (p. 73).

⁵⁴ Savran, 'Historiography', (p. 216).

⁵⁵ Savran, 'Historiography', (p. 216).

⁵⁶ Savran, 'Historiography', (p. 216).

⁵⁷ Savran, 'Historiography', (p. 216).

majority of Broadway audiences. He suggests that scholarship should move away from a method of valuation which privileged the transgressive over the normative and the avant-garde over the popular. Savran insists that the musical be opened to sociological, cultural and dramatic scholarship in the same way as any other theatrical form. Crucially, he proposes that any methodology must consider the musical's method of production and its particular circumstances of reception.

RESPONSES TO SAVRAN

I want to briefly lay out the main areas of the critical literature on the musical which can be seen either to follow Savran's work, or to pre-empt its modes of analysis. I will consider the possibilities that the work of Stacy Wolf, Andrea Most, Bruce Kirle, Raymond Knapp and Scott McMillin have established.

Wolf and Most examine 'the production (and consumption) of the Broadway musical by [...] subcultures.'⁵⁸ In Wolf's book *A Problem like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical*, she 'rereads musicals, from a lesbian and feminist perspective'.⁵⁹ Wolf considers the hermeneutics of the musical, arguing that 'text', 'spectator', and 'context' are mutually interdependent in this process.⁶⁰ In her book, *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical*, Most considers how Jewish writers, composers and performers were able to effectively write themselves into an American cultural identity through the musical.⁶¹ She is chiefly concerned with 'the nature and significance of the relationship between ethnicity and cultural form'.⁶² She suggests that non-integrated and integrated musicals respectively present 'two ways of understanding American identity: the performative and psychological'.⁶³

Knapp investigates the musical's contribution both to the formation of an American national identity and the performance of personal identity (2005

⁵⁸ Savran, 'Historiography', (p. 216).

⁵⁹ Stacy Wolf, *A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press: 2002), p. 3.

⁶⁰ Wolf, *Problem Like Maria*, p. 4.

⁶¹ Andrea Most, *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁶² Most, *Americans*, p. 3.

⁶³ Most, *Americans*, p. 30-31.

and 2006).⁶⁴ There is a problematic suggestion in his work that 'the musical is a highly collaborative art form that inevitably dilutes whatever individual genius may contribute to a particular creation.'⁶⁵ Though Knapp's approach focuses on 'what musicals do within culture', the assumption that genius is diluted suggests the lingering presence of romanticised ideas of the artist within the musical.⁶⁶

In *The Musical as Drama*, Scott McMillin also attempts to demystify notions of integration in the musical form. McMillin's proposes that the musical is built on an essential separation between song and speech: 'Difference can be felt between the book and the numbers, between the songs and dances, between dance and spoken dialogue – and these are the elements that integration is supposed to have unified.'⁶⁷ Bruce Kirle continues the problematising of the *Oklahoma!* narrative. In his 2005 book *Unfinished Show Business: Broadway Musicals as a Work in Process*, Kirle questions what traditionally counts as text in the musical, opening up the definition to include the performance.⁶⁸ He locates his work as originating from a 'distrust of linear, text-based historiographical approaches to the Broadway musical.'⁶⁹ He proposes that the performer should be recognised as a co-collaborator in the production of a performance text.

The work of each of these scholars demonstrates how the musical can be understood in terms of its method of production. However, in spite of these considerable advances, there has not yet been a radical overhaul of the

⁶⁴ Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 2005).

Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006)

⁶⁵ Knapp, *National Identity*, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁶ Knapp, *National Identity*, p. 6.

⁶⁷ [Emphasis in original.] Scott McMillin, *The Musical as Drama: A Study of the Principles and Conventions Behind Musical Shows from Kern to Sondheim* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 2.

⁶⁸ In an earlier paper on *Oklahoma!* Kirle considers the authorial intent and context of the production. Bruce Kirle, 'Reconciliation, Resolution, and the Political Role of *Oklahoma!* in American Consciousness', *Theatre Journal*, 55 (2003), 251-274.

⁶⁹ Bruce Kirle, *Unfinished Show Business: Broadway Musicals as Works-in-Process* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005).

musical's historiography. I would argue that analysing the musical through its method of production necessitates a re-writing of many of the established myths and narratives that have developed around the form. For example, if the dominant attribution of authorship in the musical to composer and lyricist is to be challenged then the work of *all* the agents whose contributions have historically been denied must be considered (beyond Kirle's suggestion of the performer).

Part of the aim of this thesis is to address Weill's collaborative practice in making musicals. Savran calls for a materialist position which frames the musical's performance text within its conditions of production and reception. To meet his requirement, I want to clearly delineate these conditions. There are a number of obstacles to doing this. For example, there is a temptation to presume chronology when laying out these processes, presenting these tasks as if one thing must happen before another. In reality, this work is a complex set of interrelated tasks and jobs, most of which operate simultaneously. Much of this labour has traditionally been hidden from wide public view, as credit has traditionally been reserved for the author/creator figure.

As this thesis is focused on the musicals Weill collaborated on (those of the second half of the 1930s and throughout the 1940s), any methodology must recognise the specific problems that historical scholarship in this area faces. I want to develop further Savran's description of the particular challenges that this kind of work faces, in order to ensure that my methodology takes account of these issues. Though many of these problems are by no means unique to the musical, it is necessary to recognise their particular impact.

PROBLEMS THE MUSICAL THEATRE HISTORIAN FACES

THE MASKING OF LABOUR

The Broadway musical has historically delighted in presenting itself as a form without labour. The show-within-a-show trope has been an excuse for easily weaving singing and dancing into a storyline since the very beginning of the form. The popularity of 'show-musicals' has contributed to the sense that the form's method of production is one without toil. Even the metaphor the 'show

must go on' has become a shorthand for the musical's sheer inevitability. Despite any momentary problems with the opening of Act Two, or an inconveniently sprained ankle on the part of a hitherto leading lady – the musical presents its production as magically free from labour – with music instigating spontaneous creativity. When the show-within-a-show attains the same artistic standard as the rest of the musical (the same perfect choreography, direction and impeccable vocal quality), it perpetuates the idea that what is happening on stage is not the result of weeks of hard work carried out by potentially hundreds of people.

This masking of labour obscures both the essential collaborative nature of the musical's method of production and the collaborators themselves. For example, and this is by no means a comprehensive list: the role of the producer in the instigation of the project, the orchestrator and vocal arranger, the specific function of the musical director in rehearsals, or the role of a conductor in a performance. The often-undocumented labour of these collaborators has frequently led to their absence from academic enquiries. This raises questions of just who counts as the author in the musical's production process and whether author is a helpful concept here at all.

PROBLEMS OF AUTHORSHIP

If musicals are the most collaborative and conventionalized of theatrical forms, what is the value of a theory of authorship? Does it suffice to describe *Lady in the Dark* (1941) as a Kurt Weill musical? Or as a Kurt Weill–Ira Gershwin–Moss Hart–Gertrude Lawrence musical?⁷⁰

Musicals are traditionally perceived to be authored by their composers and lyricists, with some credit going to the librettist. In this way, *South Pacific* is a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, or *Lady in the Dark* is a Weill or Weill, Gershwin, Hart musical, as Savran suggests above. Within the field of contemporary performance studies, Susan Melrose attempts to untangle these sorts of naming practices. She suggests that they 'reproduce a widely-evidenced *misrecognition* of collaborative professional practice.'⁷¹ Melrose is

⁷⁰ Savran, 'Historiography', (p. 214).

⁷¹ Susan Melrose, "'Constitutive ambiguities": writing professional or expert performance practices, and the Theatre du Soleil, Paris', in *Contemporary*

particularly concerned with the figure of the director, and the way in which directors are granted ownership over what is 'the outcome of a series of professional collaborations, without which that name would not have achieved public prominence.'⁷² She suggests that this signature practice conceals the labour of 'a number of relatively speaking unnamed/unwritten professional practitioners, who have effectively *contracted for* that erasure of their own names where "the show itself" is concerned.'⁷³

For the musical theatre historian, uncovering the labour of potentially hundreds of professional collaborators who have been erased from the record, is a mammoth and realistically unachievable task. Nonetheless, it is still crucial to find a way to think and write about the musical in light of its labour-intensive, deeply collaborative production method, and to move beyond author-led approaches in academic study. It may never be possible to discover and restore the names of all these invisible practitioners, but musical theatre scholarship must at the very least acknowledge their existence.

One further method by which signature practices have been validated in the musical is through the attribution of genius, and this is another reason to be cautious around questions of authorship. This attribution can be a general one, note Scott Miller's usage: 'In the 1930s the first true geniuses of the form would emerge.'⁷⁴ It can also be found in reference to individual authors or directors; Howard Kissel, when discussing *Lady in the Dark*, suggests that 'Weill's score retains its lustre simply because he was a composer of genius.'⁷⁵ There are two main effects of this for the musical. Firstly, it implies a value judgement about the integrity of the artistic product(s) in question (i.e. it is better because a genius created it). Secondly, it confirms ideas of creativity as inspired and spiritual, in contrast to the ordinary craftsmanship of those collaborators who are unnamed or unrecognised.

Theatres in Europe: A Critical Companion, ed. by Nicholas Ridout and Joe Kelleher (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 120-135 (p. 124).

⁷² Melrose, 'Constitutive ambiguities', (p. 124).

⁷³ Melrose, 'Constitutive ambiguities', (p. 124).

⁷⁴ Miller, Scott, *Strike Up the Band: A New History of Musical Theatre* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2007), p. 18.

⁷⁵ Howard Kissel in Engel, *Words with Music*, p. 43.

There is also a need to address collaborators who have been excluded from the dominant narrative not only on the basis of whether their labour was perceived as craft or art, but also, as is the case in many other fields, on the grounds of class, gender and race. Some important research has already been done in this area, particularly in regard to recovering the work of women, for example in studies by Jay Plum and Ellen Marie Peck. Plum has investigated the considerable contribution of Cheryl Crawford to 1930s and 1940s theatre.⁷⁶ Peck has researched the work of female lyricists in the early twentieth century, in order to 'place them in the musical theatre canon'.⁷⁷ This work is just beginning and any historian must be aware of likely exclusions from official accounts, documentation and established narratives.

In the above quotation, Savran demonstrates that *Lady in the Dark* is a collaborative event in which Weill is only one of a number of participants. Weill, like Ira Gershwin and Gertrude Lawrence, was one of many labourers within the production of the performance text, despite traditional concepts of ownership of artistic product. I do not believe that suggesting Weill was one of many collaborators detracts from our understanding of his contribution in any way, but instead, sets it within a collaborative process through which written documentation became a performed text.

It is clearly necessary to acknowledge the irony of this thesis in recognising that Weill was one of a number of participants. On the one hand my materialist approach minimises the established importance placed on so-called creators over other collaborators. I am shifting the focus from Weill as an artist to Weill as a contributor within a collaborative process. On the other hand, Kurt Weill sits on the left hand side of the colon in the thesis title. I have spent considerable time and energy focusing on the composer. In the next

⁷⁶ Jay Plum, 'Cheryl Crawford: One Not So Naked Individual', in *Passing Performances: Queer Readings of Leading Players in American Theatre History*, ed. by Robert A. Schanke and Kim Marra (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 239-261.

⁷⁷ (Though I would disagree with the necessity of continuing with canon as a useful strategy for historical research.) Ellen Marie Peck, 'Ah, Sweet Mystery': Rediscovering Three Female Lyricists of the Early Twentieth-Century American Musical Theater', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 19.1 (2009), 48-60 (p. 50).

chapter, I will discuss at some length the particular literature and issues that relate to Weill. My thesis therefore contributes in itself to signature practices; not least because it is a particular passion for Weill's music that drew me into the project in the first place. I am proposing however that Weill's contribution can only be understood in the context of both the broader collaborations he operates within, and the multiple agents that he works alongside. This does not negate the possibility of studying Weill; instead it calls for the recognition of the conditions that shape his collaborative practice.

PROBLEMS OF TEXT

As Kirle suggests, the musical historian must also address the issue of what counts as text. The archival traces of the musical demonstrate the range of possibilities, Knapp lists the following:

[The] preserved paper record of the 'work' in the form of the written music and book, and various preserved visual and audio traces of particular performances and revivals, to anecdotal accounts of the show in preparation or performance, to arrangements and recordings made separately of songs from a show.⁷⁸

The question of text is both a practical and theoretical one. Practically speaking carrying out research into historical musicals (and as is the case in this thesis, those of the 1930s and 1940s) frequently reveals a paucity of materials. In terms of written documentation, the score may only be represented by incomplete orchestra parts, a conductor's copy, or published piano-vocal selections. The script might be documented through unpublished selections from early drafts, possibly a script from opening night or a later published, and generally edited, edition. In terms of the production itself, the set and costumes may be recorded only through selected sketches or photographs. Reviews, photographs and personal accounts may provide additional information about specific performances. This problem is not period specific, even for recent productions where full original cast recordings might exist. As Stacy Wolf notes: 'this shortcoming appears to arise from a

⁷⁸ Knapp, *National Identity*, p. 17.

central methodological dilemma: performance analysis requires the physical proximity of scholar to scene, yet theatre is fleeting.⁷⁹

‘Work’ and ‘text’ suggest very different ideas: work implies a rather dated concept of the written, completed and unmovable object; text sits more comfortably with the current understanding of the role and importance of the reader/audience. Text also suggests a physical object which documents part of the performance event (whether may be the staged original production, or a revival, and even the private act of reading and listening to the object at hand). More comprehensively, text represents the unavailable performance event as a particular singular moment in the past. This latter definition, text in its fullest range of meanings, best represents the nature of the musical, and the understanding of it that I am proposing. The musical as a form is generally written with the staged performance act or event in mind; any paper documentation will only make available only a small aspect of the text. This recalls Roland Barthes’s position that ‘*the Text is experienced only in an activity of production*’.⁸⁰ For the novel or the poem, there may be many kinds of productions and readings, just as there are with the written documentation (or aural recording) of a musical. Yet the musical as text is generally established for a specific performance location in mind, and it is frequently this particular ‘activity of production’ that the historian is interested in. As is the case for all theatre performances, this single activity of production as an entity is inaccessible (not simply for historical or archival reasons, the unique conditions of any particular performance can never be recreated. This is the fundamental ephemerality of theatre, as Peggy Phelan suggests:

Performance occurs over a time which will not be repeated. It can be performed again, but this repetition marks it as ‘different’. The document of a performance then is only a spur to memory, an encouragement of memory to become present.⁸¹

Stacy Wolf has drawn on the work of Phelan, proposing that:

⁷⁹ Wolf, *A Problem Like Maria*, p. 6.

⁸⁰ Roland Barthes, ‘From Work to Text’ in *Image – Music – Text*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1984), pp. 155-164 (p. 157).

⁸¹ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 147.

Even as I take into account the different forms of photographs, interviews, scripts, and recorded songs, I do not attempt the futile task of reconstructing a live performance. Instead, I am interested in how representations, visual and aural, can evoke a sense of a live performance, perhaps one witnessed by the reader and now lodged in memory or perhaps one only imagined. All writing about performance is incomplete, but usefully so.⁸²

In this thesis, I want to follow Wolf's example in establishing an approach which resists reconstruction, and thinks about the musical text as a performance event.

THE PROBLEM OF THE ARCHIVE

All of these issues are magnified in the archive, where records may appear to be fragmentary and confusing. This is an issue for all theatre historians; Thomas Postlewait includes it as one of his *Twelve Cruxes*, describing it as 'a condition affecting the preservation and subsequent survival, however piecemeal and random, of the document or record.'⁸³ This is exacerbated by the way in which the musical's method of production generates paperwork: there are likely to have been multiple drafts of the text and score, with cut and re-written numbers (whether or not they have made it into the archive); the pre-rehearsal period may or may not be documented; correspondence between collaborators is unlikely to have survived to explain these drafts.

The process of selection that forms any archive is inevitably one of exclusion. Whether such exclusions were accidental or purposeful (for example if deletions have been made to create or impose an official story) it will never be possible to know exactly what is missing. In the case of Weill, what was lost, what was purposefully thrown away or what was thought not worth keeping leaves his archives telling what can appear to be only half the story. This half can be itself exasperatingly random. Scribbled on the back of some other notes, I found a synopsis in Weill's own hand for '*Hitler the Operetta*', apparently serious, but with no other notes to explain its existence. There was no further paper trail to follow.⁸⁴ This sort of experience is by no means an

⁸² Wolf, *A Problem Like Maria*, pp. 6-7.

⁸³ Thomas Postlewait, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 247.

⁸⁴ The notes can be found in a small envelope, hastily jotted down on the other

isolated event for any historian, as Postlewait suggests, 'much has been lost, destroyed, buried away, and misplaced. The past, in immeasurable ways, is gone and unrecoverable; no amount of cunning can conjure it into historical identity. We must make do with the few traces that we have.'⁸⁵

My interest is in both the complete and unfinished musicals in the archive. I do not want to disregard performance texts that were never performed; unfinished objects are as important as their performed counterparts. In the case of Weill many of his uncompleted projects exist without any kind of performance text and with little in the way of contextual evidence. It is essential then that any suitable methodology can include these traces of texts. I am concerned with how we can find ways to explore *everything* that the archive presents us with. My methodology must consider the performance text and its written traces as part of a much wider context.

APPROACHING A METHODOLOGY

The methodology that would facilitate this materialist approach has been established in contemporary performance studies. Ric Knowles provides a comprehensive model in his book, *Reading the Material Theatre*. Knowles attempts to 'develop a mode of performance analysis that takes into account the immediate conditions, both cultural and theatrical, in and through which theatrical performances are produced, on the one hand, and received, on the other.'⁸⁶ He applies this analysis in addressing questions of meaning, examining how productions are understood by their audiences in different circumstances: 'The goal is to articulate and apply a method for achieving a more precise and more fully contextualised and politicised understanding of how meaning is produced in the theatre.'⁸⁷ Knowles suggests that meaning is produced in the theatre 'as a negotiation of the intersection of three shifting

side of Weill's ideas on minstrel shows. New Haven, Yale University, MSS 30, The Papers of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya, Folder 68/18 [*American minstrel show history* – *n.d.*]. Drew does discuss the appearance of Hitler in Weill's project memos in David Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), pp. 412-413.

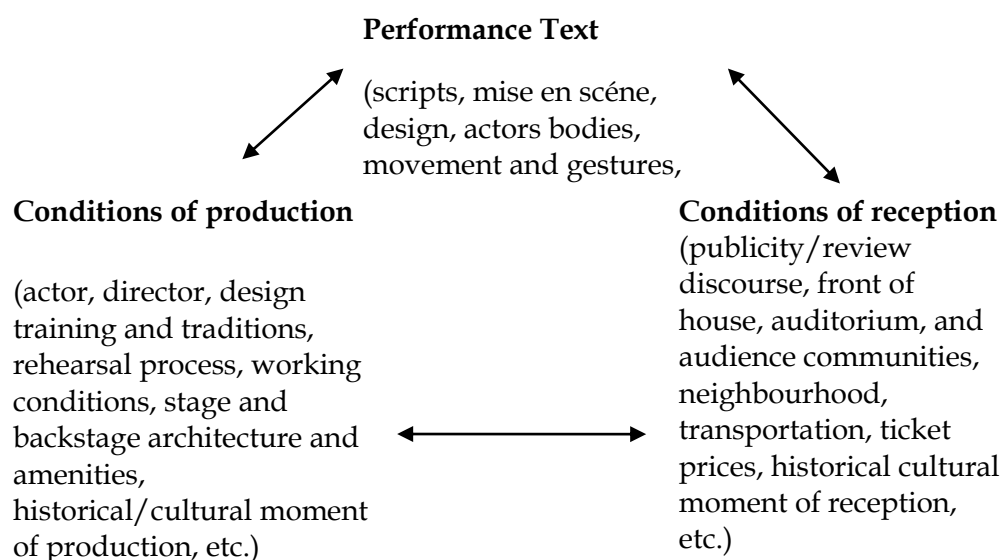
⁸⁵ Postlewait, *Theatre Historiography*, p. 248.

⁸⁶ Ric Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre: Theatre and Performance Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 3.

⁸⁷ Knowles, p. 10.

and mutually constitutive poles', defining these poles as performance, conditions of production, and conditions of reception.⁸⁸ He uses the following diagram (which I have reproduced in its entirety):⁸⁹

FIGURE 1 - KNOWLES'S MODEL



Knowles broadly groups these conditions into the following subsections:

- Theatrical training and tradition
- (Directing, design and technical theatre and actor training)
- Working conditions the production operates in
- Funding structures (commercial theatre, not-for-profit theatre)
- Professional regulatory mechanisms and stage management
- Space and place
- Theatre architecture
- Spaces of production
- Spaces of reception
- The auditorium and stage
- Physical geography around the theatre, and its neighbourhood)
- Public discourses around the text ⁹⁰

After laying out these conditions in detail, Knowles applies them in case studies, demonstrating how his methodology works in practice. In doing so, he 'flesh[es] out a model for the critical analysis of meaning production in the

⁸⁸ Knowles, p. 3.

⁸⁹ Knowles, p. 19.

⁹⁰ This list is generated from Knowles's chapter and subject headings.

theatre that tries to take a wider range of shaping circumstances into account than is most often done in contemporary criticism.⁹¹ Though his work may resemble a checklist, Knowles categorically states that he does not intend for it to be used in this way:

Although it employs a theoretical method, then, of self-conscious and invested analysis, it does not attempt to create a theoretical template that can be applied to performance analysis in any context; rather it attempts to articulate and demonstrate an open-ended practice in which the theoretical approach, 'object of study', and theatrical and cultural contexts are each both malleable and mutually constitutive.⁹²

In fact, it is precisely this open-ended quality that makes it ideal for approaching the musical in the archive. It allows enquiries into how meaning is produced comparable to those that Knowles carries out in his case studies.

I will now outline the processes involved in the musical's method of production, from the instigation of the project to the translation of that idea into a staged work presented to an audience. This methodology suggests that archival traces can be included; surviving fragments can be placed into a grid or matrix of performance conditions. This clarification of the musical's conditions of production and reception allows what has survived to be appreciated in the context of what has not. There is a possible note of caution about this approach in Thomas Postlewait's work. He is particularly concerned with 'the relationship between historical events and their possible contexts.'⁹³ Postlewait argues that there is a danger of overwhelming the event with its circumstances, and that this approach can remove any sense of personal agency:

This idea of a determining context makes the event a mere effect of whatever external factors the historian identifies. Human motives, intentions, and acts become negligible (a strange position to take for explaining the history of creative endeavours and accomplishments in the arts).⁹⁴

While I would agree that denying all personal contribution would be unhelpful, in the case of the musical, the literature I have examined so far

⁹¹ Knowles, p. 101.

⁹² Knowles, p. 22.

⁹³ Postlewait, *Theatre Historiography*, p. 8.

⁹⁴ Postlewait, *Theatre Historiography*, p. 11.

would suggest that too much emphasis has been placed on concepts of personal agency. In fact, Postlewait appears to be replicating an ideology I have already suggested is problematic. I argue that it is more useful to think about agents operating within the musical's established method of production, and to use a methodological framework to observe this activity.

ESTABLISHING THE MUSICAL'S CONDITIONS OF PRODUCTION AND RECEPTION

The musical's method of production is built around a complex series of exchanges between financial and creative producers. In order to understand these processes it is necessary to fully document the musical's particular conditions, and so I have expanded Knowles's work to achieve this. I want to be clear that just as was the case for Knowles, I do not present this framework as a regimented approach for historical study. When introducing his own method for historical analysis, Postlewait likewise warns his reader:

[It] provides no system; it has no set mode of investigation, no preconceived meaning. It is, instead, a model for how to ask questions. The answers will be all over the map, from project to project. I therefore want to insist that no theory or unifying idea guides this model, which is a preliminary outline for how to avoid systematic or formulaic thinking. The model suggests many places to search, many questions to ask.⁹⁵

I want to develop a similar approach, which will enable rigorous research and facilitate the finding of new material and the reconsideration of what might have already been taken for granted.

CONTEXT AND TRADITION

The framework can be broken into several categories, the first of which is context and tradition. This comprises both the sociocultural and theatrical contexts that any given musical exists within, i.e. everything which exists independently from any one production, but has a direct effect on it. This area includes Knowles's emphasis on theatrical training and tradition, though I also want to include what Postlewait calls 'artistic heritage'.⁹⁶ He suggests that

⁹⁵ Postlewait, *Theatre Historiography*, p. 19.

⁹⁶ Knowles, p. 24.

‘just as artist and world interact and join at the event, so too does each artist, when creating any artistic work, operate within and against the artistic heritage – the aesthetic traditions, influences, canons, stylistic codes, mentors, institutions, and cultural semiotics.’⁹⁷

These elements should be considered alongside the following: current technical capabilities that shape/restrict performance; audience expectations (e.g. over casting, the musical’s dramatic structure and running length); existing industry networks of theatre professionals (e.g. previous collaborations and connections between individuals); and laws, legislation and regulations (e.g. stage management rules, Musicians Union and Equity regulations, decency and censorship laws). Knowles recommends that professional regulatory mechanisms should also be considered as they affect the rehearsal process.⁹⁸ In the production of a musical, there may be representatives of unions for actors, technicians, stage management, directors, writers and musicians who may all have agreed standards that need to be upheld. These standards may well be different; for example the musicians’ union may demand different working hours or breaking patterns to that of the actors’ union.

PRE-PRODUCTION CONDITIONS

This covers the conditions that guide the production process. These conditions apply both to any one particular production and its contemporaries – they are not necessarily unique to the musical in question (though they will shape it). They include: questions of funding; the structure within which the production operates (e.g. commercial Broadway theatre, not-for-profit theatre, touring productions); the way in which the production is being funded; and the production’s financial stability and attached conditions this funding dictates. In terms of the writing process: the selection process for the collaborative team and lead performers (e.g. a producer-led selection of a writing team, or the hiring of a ‘star’ before a word has been written); the background of these individuals, their motivations and intentions; and any known limiting issues of space and place.

⁹⁷ Postlewait, *Theatre Historiography*, p. 18.

⁹⁸ Knowles, p. 58.

DEVELOPMENT OF A PERFORMANCE TEXT

This covers the instigation of a project from the original idea up until the point it is recognised as a 'finished' performance text, which then becomes the basis for subsequent repetitions. In the case of the musical this freezing usually takes place after its Broadway opening, though further occasional changes may still be made. The development process includes: the hiring of the rest of the creative and managerial teams and the cast; the writing and composing process (before rehearsals, during rehearsals and in response to previews); the design, choreography and direction; and the rehearsal process.

SPACE AND PLACE

These conditions of production and reception are broadly taken from Knowles, with the additional consideration that the musical can operate in multiple performance spaces (in out-of-town previews and on Broadway). They include theatre architecture, and spaces of production and reception, specifically the stage and auditorium. As in Knowles, this category also includes the physical geography around the theatre and its neighbourhood.⁹⁹

PUBLIC DISCOURSES AROUND THE TEXT

Though public discourses can be led by the marketing of a production, there may be specific press coverage before and after the opening. The audience have a particularly important role in the musical, since they act as a collaborator with collective agency. Changes are made based on audience responses during out-of-town and Broadway previews. Critical discourse also has a particular power over Broadway theatre, since a bad set of reviews has historically closed shows, or stopped a show on the road from ever arriving. Postlewait further expands on the importance of reception:

The idea of reception includes the conditions of perception and evaluation, the processes of comprehension by various people -- their horizon of expectations and their methods of interpreting (and misinterpreting) the event at the time. The reception reveals the consequences of the event, its completion.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Knowles, p. 79.

¹⁰⁰ Postlewait, *Theatre Historiography*, p. 13.

FIGURE 2 - THE MUSICAL'S CONDITIONS OF PRODUCTION AND RECEPTION

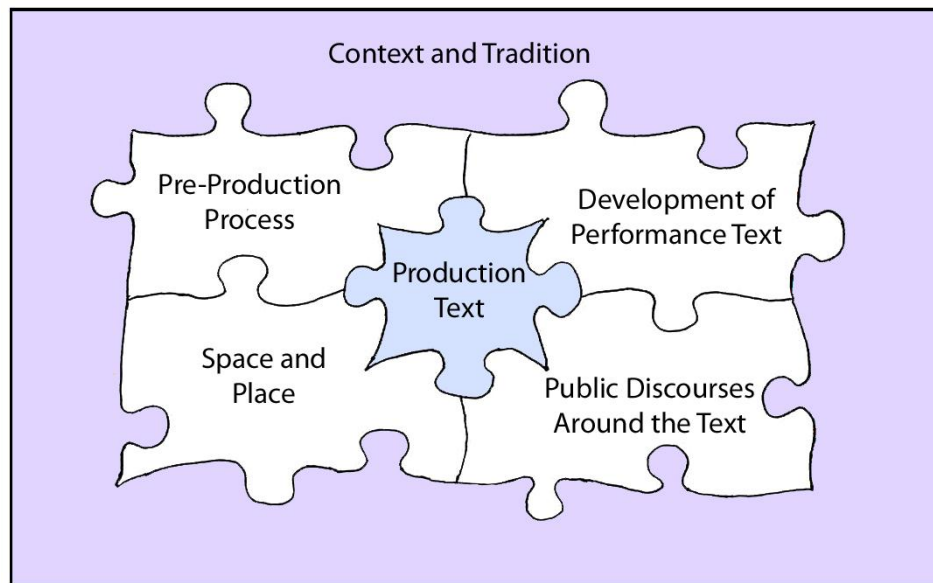
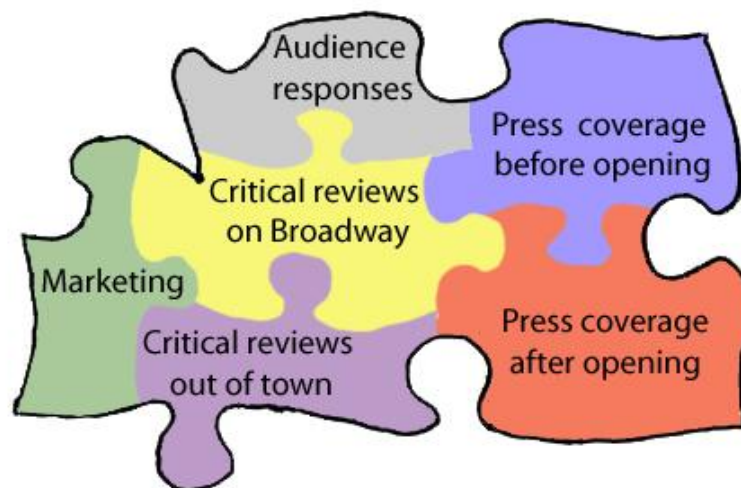


FIGURE 3 - PUBLIC DISCOURSES AROUND THE TEXT



Though the critical reception of a performance event is often well documented (and preserved) other discourse can be difficult to discover from the archive or from external sources.

ASSEMBLING THE JIGSAW

These five conditions of performance and reception act like jigsaw pieces from which the whole picture can be put together. The idea of a jigsaw is a useful metaphor, since it suggests that the performance text is only another piece of the puzzle that may or may not be present (see *fig.2*). Each one of the five segments is made up of smaller sub-category conditions (see *fig.3*). Understanding these conditions creates a view of the process as a unified whole, acknowledging what we do not have access to, and providing a framework for what has been conserved. Within this model, the inaccessible performance text is no longer the focus of enquiry, but part of a wider approach which considers it as the product of a series of observable processes.

CASE STUDY – THE OPERA FROM MANNHEIM

One of my requirements was that this methodology would support the study of texts represented by incomplete evidence. Though it is somewhat better documented than my earlier example of the Hitler operetta, perhaps the most curious example in the Weill archive is the almost entirely unheard of collaboration that began in March 1937, known as *The Opera from Mannheim*. I want to carry out a micro case study of this work, in order to apply my methodology and to establish what kind of analysis it allows.

Though this text was never completed or performed, it marks a transition point in Weill's decision to remain in the USA. It is the only time that he directly addressed his experience as an exile from the Nazis. In a letter to Lotte Lenya, his wife, dated 28 March 1937, he described the project in detail:

We worked out a wonderful plot, and all three of us are very enthusiastic: a play about the refugees. It starts in the Mannheim Opera during an opera rehearsal, which suddenly is interrupted by a Nazi who fires everyone because they are non-Aryans. They all immigrate to New York, and we will show their adventures there, with a lot of humour, of course, but, for example there's also a scene in which they receive a letter from one of their friends in Mannheim who

is no longer alive when the letter arrives. In the end, one of their friends from Germany comes to tell them that everything has been arranged so they can come back, but they tell him they do not want to return, and at the very end they perform the opera they once had rehearsed in Mannheim in a little movie theatre in some small town in America.¹⁰¹

None of Weill's sketches for this work have survived.¹⁰² There is no performance text to speak of, and what has remained in the archive seems so fragmented that the work is easy to ignore. The evidence we do have, however, is intriguing.

According to Ronald Sanders, a biographer of Weill, the collaboration began when Weill met the successful scriptwriters Sam and Bella Spewack at a party given by George and Ira Gershwin.¹⁰³ The lyricist E.Y. 'Yip' Harburg and producer Max Gordon quickly became involved. Most of what remains of the project are plans noted in correspondence between Weill and the Spewacks, who seem to have been more heavily involved than Harburg, and in personal letters between Weill and his wife. The involvement of Max Gordon caught the interest of the *New York Times*, who mentioned the progress of the project in their theatre gossip column five times from April 1937 until March the following year.¹⁰⁴ The only other reference comes from an unpublished telephone interview Sanders conducted with Harburg.¹⁰⁵ I have used the jigsaw diagram to highlight how this surviving evidence can be incorporated (see fig.4).

¹⁰¹ Kurt Weill, '175. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [28 March 1937]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 224-225 (p. 225).

¹⁰² In a letter to Lenya, Weill wrote that he had completed 'five very good songs and a lot of material for the show'. Kurt Weill, '191. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [5 June 1937]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 244-245 (p. 245).

¹⁰³ Ronald Sanders, *The Days Grow Short: The Life and Music of Kurt Weill* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), p. 244.

¹⁰⁴ 'Rialto Gossip', *New York Times*, 25 April 1937, p. 163.

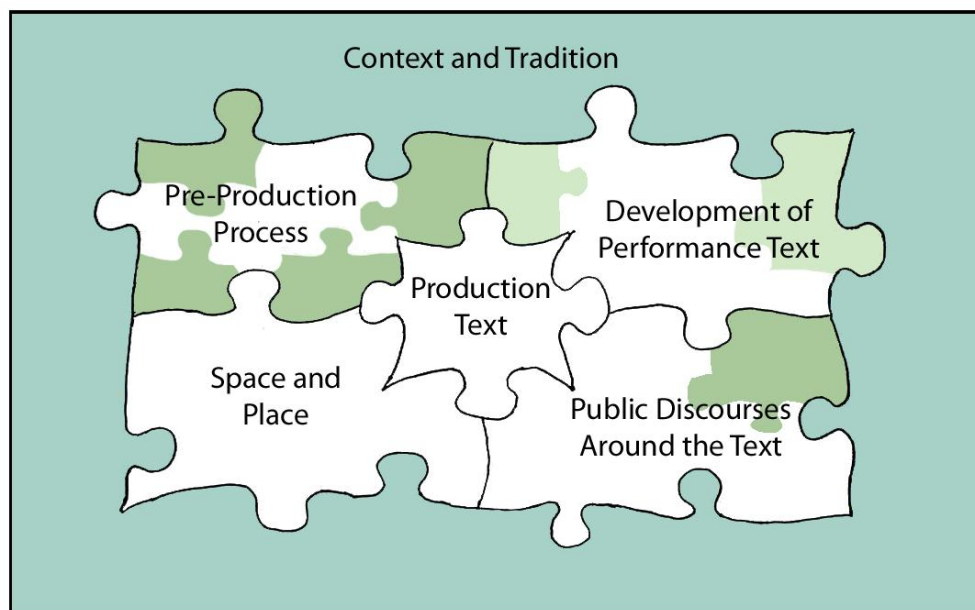
'News of the Stage', *New York Times*, 26 May 1937, p. 30.

'News of the Stage', *New York Times*, 1 July 1937, p. 32.

'Gossip of the Rialto', *New York Times*, 6 March 1938, Section, Drama, Screen, Music, Dance, Art, Radio, p. 149.

¹⁰⁵ Sanders, p. 423.

FIGURE 4 - DOCUMENTATION FOR THE OPERA FROM MANNHEIM



Most of the evidence fits primarily into the Development of the Performance Text piece. Though there is not a full picture of the writing process, it is possible to ascertain that Weill and the Spewacks worked together in person several times, as did Weill and Harburg. There is Weill's description of his plan for the work quoted above, and in a letter to the Spewacks he proposed ideas for possible numbers.¹⁰⁶ I can also investigate the implications that the choice of Mannheim, as opposed to say Berlin, presents for Weill. With respect to Context and Tradition, since this information is not dependent on its preservation in the archive, I can independently cross-reference these fragments with their wider context. This is also true for aspects of the Pre-Production Process category, especially in regard to the backgrounds of individuals, where it is possible to make informed judgements on their likely reasons and motivations for collaboration. The Public Discourses category includes the *New York Times* commentary.

The act of positioning evidence in this context allows the possibility of reviewing existing, previously considered evidence, and being able to draw

¹⁰⁶ WLRC, Photocopy TS, [KW to Bella and Sam Spewack, April 30 1937 – (English)] (Ser. 40 Spewack, Bella and Sam).

new conclusions from it. The newspaper coverage and the letters between Weill and the Spewacks suggest that the piece was not abandoned before 6th March 1938 at the earliest, nine months after the Weill historian David Drew supposed.¹⁰⁷ This new elongated timeline (though I am not suggesting Weill was working on it continuously), raises the question of why Weill was reluctant to bring the project to a definite close.

Weill's synopsis and Yip Harburg's later recollection are considerably different; Harburg describes the Mannheim opera company as a 'Jewish theatrical troupe'.¹⁰⁸ This discrepancy suggests Weill's apparent inexperience with the audience's expectations of what was deemed appropriate in Broadway musicals. Harburg's re-writing of the subject matter perhaps reflects his sense of the feasibility of a musical based on an exiled opera company. It highlights the negotiation between new ideas and subject matter in the musical form and in the understanding of what an audience would pay to see. It brings into question Weill's initial ability to appreciate his new conditions of production. The incongruity of referring to German exile is provocative in a season which was dominated by comic revues and, in one case, a round-the-world cruise musical, *Jubilee*.¹⁰⁹ Yet after three years of observing Broadway musical theatre, Weill still believed the show would be successful: 'From everything which is going on here now, it seems to me that the theme of our show is just right for Broadway at this moment, and I think we should make every effort to have it ready for the next season, because I am sure that everybody is waiting for this kind of a show.'¹¹⁰ His apparent naivety challenges the idea that Weill underwent some kind of instant transformation to Broadway culture, though it does reveal an attempt to understand what the market would support (even if it was misguided). The evidence reveals how Weill attempted to manage the business of collaboration, and protected his

¹⁰⁷ Drew, *Handbook*, p. 286.

¹⁰⁸ Sanders, p. 244.

¹⁰⁹ 'Jubilee', *The Oxford Companion to American Theatre*, 3rd edn., ed. by Gerald Bordman and Thomas S. Hirschak, (Oxford: Oxford Reference Online, 2004) <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t149.e1644>> [accessed on 19 January 2008].

¹¹⁰ WLRC, Photocopy, TS, *Kurt Weill Letter [KW in Hollywood to Bella and Sam Spewack March 3 1938]*, (Ser. 40 Spewack, Bella and Sam).

own cultural status. At the end of the project, the *New York Times* falsely suggested Weill had been removed from the team. Weill wrote immediately to the Spewacks, his proficiency in damage control suggests the seriousness with which he viewed his own reputation.¹¹¹ This raises questions about the interaction between newspaper coverage and the early production process in 1930s musicals; clearly, this is an area in which more work needs to be done.

This brief case study has revealed that the methodology facilitates the examination of even the slightest trace of a performance text, in reviewing known material to produce valuable new information. The enquiry has revealed on a factual level that the established chronology of the *Opera from Mannheim* has been miscalculated. It demonstrates the degree of Weill's early consciousness of the market, and shows clear evidence of Weill as someone actively managing his cultural capital in the media. It confirms that Weill was consciously engaged with the conditions of reception and production of his work. This methodology allows a detailed analysis of material. This case study demonstrates that this 'deep-drilling' into collaborations reveals important and original conclusions to be drawn from small amounts of archive material, that have previously been obscured by a false emphasis on the text and the author-creator figure.

THESIS OUTLINE

In order to continue this analysis into Weill's collaborative work further, I first need to address the other two areas of context I established at the beginning of this Introduction; Weill as composer, and Weill as exile. This work will take up the next two chapters.

In Chapter 1, I will address those issues around Weill as a composer which are prohibitive to my work, such as the impact of the romanticised notion of the profession. I will examine how the literature has been dominated by versions

¹¹¹ The first article appeared in 'News of the Stage; Ina Claire Opens Tonight in a Lonsdale Comedy 'Night Between the Rivers' in Preparation The Center Theatre Problem The Max Gordon Musical', *New York Times*, 15 February 1938, p. 21; and the second in 'Gossip of the Rialto', *New York Times*, 6 March 1938, section Drama, Screen, Music, Dance, Art, Radio, p. 149. Weill's letter is held at WLRC, [KW in Hollywood to Bella and Sam Spewack March 3 1938], (Ser. 40 Spewack, Bella and Sam).

of the 'Two Weills' concept, explaining its continuing influence on the literature. I will explore the much disputed obituary of Weill written by Theodor Adorno, and the model that Adorno presents of the 'Musikregisseur'.¹¹² This chapter will explore the emphasis on text/author led approach within musicology, and the way in which this has removed composers from their material circumstances.

In Chapter 2, I will explore how narratives of German exile to the U.S during the 1930s and early 1940s have shaped the way in which Weill's experience has been understood. I will consider how the idea of America in German cultural life in the 1920s was used in contemporary music and operatic reform, and discuss Weill's particular role in these movements. In order to consider the exile experience, I want to think about one specific aspect of this process as emblematic for the whole – the loss of language. Musicians and composers in exile are often seen as protected from this loss, on the basis of romanticised notions of music as a universal language. I will then address the formal ideas of intellectual exile that Weill's actions are seen to betray, of separation and distance. I will establish that these concepts of exile have also been problematic to properly understanding Weill's engagement with the conditions of production and reception of American cultural industries.

In Chapter 3, I will return to the kind of deep analysis that I have started in this Introduction. I will consider Weill's negotiation of entry into American art worlds as a process of exchanges through the use of two detailed case studies. In the first, I will extend and develop my earlier finding that Weill can be seen to actively manage his cultural capital within the media in more detail. Weill keenly attempts to control his own reputation, for example, in manipulating representations of his German work within the American press. In the second case study, I will follow the exchanges of economic assets during Weill's first few years in the USA, through his various income streams in this period. I want to establish that by 'following the money', working practices that were previously hidden can be revealed. The section on Weill's orchestration is the

¹¹² 'Theatre director who used music as his medium.' Theodor W. Adorno, 'Kurt Weill – Musiker des epischen Theaters', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 15 April 1950, unpublished trans. by Jeremy Sams, 2008.

first examination of the archival evidence in this area, and moves scholarship towards a new understanding of the composer's working practices. This chapter will demonstrate that by setting aside romanticised concepts of Weill, his collaborative practices can be revealed.

In Chapter 4, I will consider *Johnny Johnson* at length, with close reference to Bruce Kirle's critical analysis of the musical. Kirle presents another model in which Weill is actively "Germanising" American musical theatre. Weill's first musical written entirely in the U.S demonstrates the composer's negotiation of musical theatre production, and so is particularly valuable for case study. If there were truth to any of the various notions of 'Two Weills', *Johnny* is the point at which it would be possible to see one Weill separating from the other. In this chapter, I will trouble the presumptions that romanticised versions of Weill rely on by revealing the complex set of agencies at work within collaborative production. I want to reveal Weill's own changing ways of thinking about theory and drama in the context of his circumstances.

Unmasking the musical's method of production as necessarily collaborative, and examining established narratives in the light of this, is a significant contribution both to musical theatre scholarship and to Weill studies. My work formalises a proper understanding of how the musical is produced, an understanding which is grounded in the acknowledgement of the collaborative process and of text-as-performance-event. Within Weill studies, my work reveals the composer's negotiation into American art worlds, and his role in collaborations. This enables Weill's work in the U.S to be understood in a new light, with the emphasis no longer on Weill as Author, or Weill as genius artist, but on Weill within a collaboration acting as one of many agents.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Despite the pleas of enthusiasts in Europe and the USA, some of whom felt that even at the height of his fame Weill had been underestimated, the musical world remained sceptical [of Weill], partly because of the emphasis that was now laid on his collaboration with Brecht, and partly because of a suspicion that no composer who devoted the last years of his life to writing Broadway shows deserved, or could even have wished, to be taken seriously.

David Drew, 1980¹

Many versions of Weill's life are told from this Faustian point of view: Weill sold out fame, for money, through relentless expansion of the kingdom of the banal. But Weill faced the same dilemma that Schoenberg and Webern and Mann's Leverkühn faced: after one had concentrated one's art to the limits of sobriety, without development or fancifulness of any sort, what did one do next? [...] Leverkühn, of course, really did sell his soul to the devil; but Weill did something far more modern, far more radical: he sold his soul to Broadway.

Daniel Albright, 2000²

In the last chapter I established a methodology for the historical examination of the musical which built directly on the work of Ric Knowles and Thomas Postlewait. As I demonstrated, this framework is facilitated by scholars who have already begun to consider the musical in terms of its method of production. As a result, my work formalises a wider rejection which has been taking place across the field, of the need to make value judgements about the musical, or justify it as a proper object of study. Savran, Wolf, Knapp, McMillin and Most have all shaped the growing body of literature which has demonstrated the possibilities for critical analysis of the musical.

In this thesis, I am primarily concerned with Weill's collaborative practice in producing musicals. The existing scholarship in this area has been hindered

¹ David Drew, 'Weill, Kurt (Julian)' in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* ed. by Stanley Sadie, (London: Macmillan, 1980), vol. 20 Virelai-Zywny, pp. 300-310 (p. 302).

² Daniel Albright, 'Kurt Weill as Modernist', *Modernism/Modernity*, 7 (2000), 273-284 (p. 284).

by the contested value of music produced for American cultural industries (both for Hollywood and Broadway). This has led to a struggle on the part of academics to reconcile Weill's output in exile with his career in Europe, a struggle which has been exacerbated by anxieties about the musical.

In this chapter I will trace the uneasiness about the Broadway musical in the literature on Weill. As the two quotations at the start of this chapter suggest (I would emphasise that they were written twenty years apart), the trope of Broadway as commercial and inherently less valuable than classical musical forms has been at the heart of the historiography of Weill's career in the USA. The 'Two Weills' concept was generated and formalised as a consequence of the need to accept and justify Weill's actions (as they are outside the normal expected behaviour of a 'proper' composer). There has been a significant movement away from this limited apologetic focus, which I will later address. However, as the need to excuse Weill's involvement with the musical shaped both his early critical reception and later academic responses, it is necessary to present an overview of the impact of the theory.

Weill's collaborative practice and output in the USA threatens a variety of romanticised notions of the composer: autonomy, genius, stylistic progression within a unified 'body of work', and even the idea of a work itself. As a result, Weill's artistic integrity has been challenged, after all, how could a *proper* artist behave in such ways? As is apparent in the above quotation from David Drew, Weill's work in the USA has even been seen to damage the reputation of the music he wrote in Europe. In order to defend Weill's pre-1935 music from his apparently erroneous activities in exile, the concept of two distinct composers has been established. 'Two Weills' is used to explain and excuse Weill's Broadway musicals as effectively the work of another person. Weill is apparently so irreconcilably separated from his former self by exile, that the only way he can be explained is through the invention of entirely separate figures. In his biography of Weill, Foster Hirsch calls the idea the 'persistent legend of two monolithic Kurt Weills confronting each other across vast cultural and geographical distances.'³ This legend dominated the

³ Foster Hirsch, *Kurt Weill on Stage: From Berlin to Broadway* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), p. 7.

historiography of Weill as it was being established, formalising a dualistic mode of thinking which has left the field struggling with questions of Weill's identity in exile.

In this chapter I am going to analyse the 'Two Weills' mythology, and its formalisation by David Drew in the 1980 edition of *The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. I want to establish how Weill can be seen to challenge and negate the dominant model by which composers have traditionally been judged; as I have established, Weill's career in exile resists the mythologised composer-as-genius descriptions. I will examine the obituary Adorno wrote for Weill, and the potential model for moving away from this romanticised composer figure it presents. Adorno's concept of the *Musikregisseur* illuminates and further develops how Weill's own description of the 'composer as dramatist' can be used. Having established that there is another framework within which Weill can be considered, I will also consider recent developments in the field which have revised or challenged concepts around Weill, for example the Kurt Weill Edition series, and its impact on the notion of work. I will move from the early dualistic approaches to the composer, through to the beginnings of the recognition of Weill as a collaborative practitioner.

WEILL'S HISTORIOGRAPHY

'TWO WEILLS'

Though this idea can arguably be found in contemporaneous reviews of Weill's musicals, it was undoubtedly formalised by David Drew in his 1980 article.⁴ This is partly due to Drew's reputation within Weill scholarship as well as the canonical implications of inclusion in the pages of *Grove* as part of the apparatus of highbrow music appreciation and musicology.⁵ Though

⁴ bruce mcclung suggests in reference to these reviews that: 'Critics, beginning with Virgil Thomson in his review of *Lady in the Dark*, had already promulgated the "two Weill" theory, the American one an impostor who sold his European musical birthright for adoptive status in Shubert Alley.' bruce mcclung, 'From Myth to Monograph: Weill Scholarship, Fifty Years After', *Theater*, 30.3 (2000), 107-117 (p. 109).

⁵ Drew had already published two collections around Weill: David Drew, *Über Kurt Weill* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975). Kurt Weill, *Ausgewählte*

Drew carries out a lengthy consideration of Weill, it is this element of the article which has had the most impact. Bruce McClung explains its influence:

Since the 1970s some writers have tended to view Weill's bifurcated career and oeuvre as irreparable and reduce the composer to 'one of music's great "might-have-beens"'. Others have sought to deconstruct the "two Weill" theory as a remnant of European modernism and regard the American works as harbingers of postmodern music-theatre, with Weill the prototypical 'crossover' composer.⁶

Kim Kowalke writes, somewhat obliquely though in obvious reference to Drew, that 'even the composer's staunchest champion positioned one Weill at the greatest possible distance from the other.'⁷ As I have suggested, the concept enabled Drew to defend the European Weill against the sins of the American Weill, in an attempt to salvage his contested reputation. I want to establish exactly what Drew felt needed pardoning.

I am aware that as a Weill scholar, problematising Drew's work in this way is somewhat analogous to publicly denouncing one's parents. (There is, perhaps, a note of this in McClung's restraint in not directly attributing the 'great "might-have-been"' quote to Drew. Kowalke likewise displays caution in the above quotation.) Drew's commitment to cataloguing Weill's music and papers is documented in his seminal book *Kurt Weill: A Reader*, which as a catalogue necessarily facilitates all subsequent approaches to the composer.⁸ Drew's hard line position on 'American' Weill evidently originates from an overriding dedication to the composer and his work. Nonetheless, though Drew's contribution is the cornerstone on which Weill scholarship has been built, I want to acknowledge from the outset that his theoretical positioning of the composer as inherently divided is problematic. Thinking about Drew as an apologist in no way negates his contribution to the field, but rather reopens the discussion around his conclusions. That Drew continues to provide a gateway for further research necessitates the unpicking of his ideological position, so its influence can be properly recognised.

Schriften: [von] Kurt Weill ed. by David Drew, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975).

⁶ McClung, 'From Myth', (p. 109).

⁷ Kim H. Kowalke, 'Kurt Weill, Modernism, and Popular Culture: Öffentlichkeit als Stil', *Modernism/modernity*, 2 (1995), 27-69 (p. 34).

⁸ David Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987).

In the *Grove* article, Drew's foremost objection to Weill's music in the USA is the composer's lack of autonomy. Drew reassures his reader: 'there is more evidence of restricted opportunities and inferior conditions than of any creative decline.'⁹ He suggests that any weakness is not inherently Weill's own, but rather the result of changed production methods. This shift reduced the quality of Weill's music, by limiting the amount of authority Weill was able to maintain over his scores. Drew is suggesting that without this control no-one could have expected Weill to have been able to maintain his former standards. Drew elaborates:

The 'final' form, published or unpublished, of each of Weill's Broadway shows reflects a long process of collective criticism and amendment which involved the entire production team, together with the financial backers, the publishers and song pluggers, and finally the public itself. Once aesthetic criteria had been subordinated, no musical idea, however inspired, was defensible for its own sake if it could be shown to conflict with any of the collective interests of the team.¹⁰

For Drew, Weill's creativity is obstructed by his lack of authority in collaboration, because he is no longer able to make decisions himself. As a result the work does not reflect purely Weill's own autonomous decisions (and Drew is clearly talking about work, not text). This falsely assumes the existence of the autonomous composer in German theatre of the 1920s.

Unsurprisingly, Drew dismisses much of Weill's American music, though he places particular blame on its audience. He suggests that '*Johnny Johnson* proved to be musically beyond the reach of the average Broadway theatre-goer.'¹¹ In the case of *Knickerbocker Holiday*, Drew remarks with some surprise that 'although much of it was still unmistakably European in idiom, it was understood and enjoyed.'¹² For Drew, *Lady in the Dark* was the moment of departure from one Weill to the other, 'a new Weill was born, to the horror of the handful of old admirers who were waiting for an American *Dreigroschenoper*.'¹³ He maintains that these collaborative production methods deny 'the very notion of a "work", with its connotations of individual vision

⁹ Drew, 'Weill', (p. 306).

¹⁰ Drew, 'Weill', (p. 308).

¹¹ Drew, 'Weill', (p. 302).

¹² Drew, 'Weill', (p. 302).

¹³ Drew, 'Weill', (p. 306).

and immanent form.¹⁴ He praises Weill's courage in what he reads as an act of capitulation to these methods, making the remarkable suggestion that Weill's achievements on Broadway 'exacted from him a degree of self-sacrifice greater than any that would have been demanded by a totalitarian ministry of culture.'¹⁵ The implication that staying in Germany might have been, at least artistically, a better option, is an idea which illustrates the utter contempt in which Drew holds Broadway. He even attributes Weill's early death to the strain of collaborative production methods:

Few if any of his old admirers can have appreciated that the demands made upon his considerable stamina were far greater than any he had been accustomed to in Europe: at least two-thirds of his time was now devoted to the extra-musical problems arising from the exigencies peculiar to Broadway production. The strain eventually proved too great for him.¹⁶

In the *Grove* article, Drew uses 'Two Weills' as the title of a subsection under which he makes his final assessment of Weill's reputation.¹⁷ This section reads as a passionate act of defence, an attempt to rehabilitate the European composer whom Drew deeply admires. He maintains that 'had Weill continued to develop after 1933 as he had in the previous years, he could have become one of the commanding figures in German music.'¹⁸ He suggests that 'even if Weill remains one of music's great "might-have-beens", his actual achievement is substantial and likely to prove of enduring significance.'¹⁹

In 2009, J. Bradford Robinson updated Drew's article for the online *Grove* edition. I want to compare the two in order to reveal the lingering presence of Drew's objections. Robinson sets out 'the two problems [Weill] bequeathed to his immediate posterity: the "Brecht-Weill" problem and the problem of the "two Weills".'²⁰ (I would suggest instead that they were bequeathed to his

¹⁴ Drew, 'Weill', (p. 307).

¹⁵ Drew, 'Weill', (p. 307).

¹⁶ Drew, 'Weill', (p. 302).

¹⁷ Drew, 'Weill', (p. 308).

¹⁸ Drew, 'Weill', (p. 309).

¹⁹ Drew, 'Weill', (p. 309).

²⁰ David Drew and J. Bradford Robinson, 'Weill, Kurt (Julian)', in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online),
<<http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.oxfordjournals.org/abstract/doi/10.1017/9780195380153.003>>

reputation.) He swiftly addresses the former by calling suggestions that Brecht also composed some of the music entirely false. Robinson does not analyse the latter concept in depth, simply stating that:

The problem of the 'two Weills' is more fundamental and raises some basic questions in the aesthetics of musical reception. Obviously Weill's European works and his American works spoke to quite different audiences and require different sets of categories for their appraisal. This difference was long thought to be unbridgeable and to stand in need of special biographical or even psychological pleading.²¹

Robinson proposes that Weill saw no such division in his own life and output. The conclusion he reaches relies on romanticised notions of the composer:

As a confirmed man of the theatre, Weill was less interested in a sacrosanct work or text than in the reactions of its intended audience. To achieve his ends he frequently made or sanctioned far-reaching changes in his scores, albeit never so as to violate the work's fundamental ethos. But just as the importance of the 'text' recedes in his output, so does the notion of a composer as fashioning an inimitable personal style and expressing a consistent artistic persona.²²

In Robinson's view, Weill is seen to be actively protecting the artistic integrity of the work against too many concessions to his audience. He concludes by noting that Weill's work is best viewed 'under the categories of stylistic plurality and applied composition, categories that have some right to be regarded as his historical contribution to postmodernism.'²³

Tamara Levitz's 2002 paper, 'Putting Kurt Weill in His Historical Place' (published within the Kurt Weill Foundation's newsletter), radically disputes the position of both Drew's article and Robinson's later revision. She makes the suggestion that both articles rely on colonialist ways of thinking. Levitz traces the cursory nature of Weill coverage before Drew's 1980 article, pointing out that Drew's 'ten-page article [...] must have come as a profound revelation.'²⁴ She suggests that by 'redefining Weill's works in terms of transcendent modernist values, Drew could extricate them from history, there-

ove/music/30032>, [accessed 8 May 2010], §5, Posthumous Reputation.

²¹ Robinson, 'Weill, Kurt (Julian)', §5.

²² Robinson, 'Weill, Kurt (Julian)', §5.

²³ Robinson, 'Weill, Kurt (Julian)', §5.

²⁴ Tamara Levitz, 'Putting Kurt Weill in His Historical Place: The New Grove Articles', *Kurt Weill Foundation Newsletter*, 20.2 (Fall 2002), 4-9 (p. 4).

by successfully bypassing the issues of Jewish German experience and American immigration that had so unsettled postwar critics.²⁵ Levitz argues that Drew views America in 'a rigidly colonialist fashion as the antithesis or even negation of German modernism.'²⁶ She highlights the implication of Drew's suggestion that Weill abdicated his artistic autonomy in exile as the idea that 'cultural miscegenation caused [Weill's] personality to dissolve into anxious nothingness'.²⁷

Levitz argues that Robinson's later article merely echoes Drew's position: 'rather than question the modernist assumptions that mar Drew's 1980 descriptions of Weill's compositions, Drew and Robinson build on and strengthen them.'²⁸ (She respectfully involves Drew in the revision process of the article, a contribution which he later denied.²⁹) She suggests that both contributors 'continue to conclude erroneously that Weill's Europeanness made him essentially different from American colleagues.'³⁰ Levitz questions the underlying colonialist logic that requires Weill to be "put in place" at all, and the 'colonialist binary logic that requires that Weill remain true to one culture or another.'³¹ She proposes that:

The 2001 *New Grove* teaches us that it is time to stop seeking a "final verdict" on Weill altogether and to start asking why we have been so motivated by questions of reputation in the first place. [...] We could try to describe all of Weill's works within their individual historical contexts, without seeking to elevate one culture above another.³²

Drew's dismissive reaction to Levitz's article was later published in an interview in the *Kurt Weill Newsletter*. He notes that 'time had been less kind

²⁵ Levitz, (p. 4).

²⁶ Levitz, (p. 4).

²⁷ Levitz, (p. 7).

²⁸ Levitz, (p. 7).

²⁹ '[The] removal and replacement [of the Two Weills section] were the culmination of an extensive re-write of the entire 1980 article by other hands – a complex process already completed before I even got wind of it.' David Drew, 'Nach einem halben Jahrhundert... Fifty Years of Working on Kurt Weill', *Kurt Weill Newsletter*, 23.2 (Fall 2005), 6-9 (p. 8).

³⁰ Levitz, (p. 9).

³¹ Levitz, (p. 9).

³² Levitz, (p. 9).

[to the article] than I would have liked to be three years ago.’³³ Drew sees the ‘mysterious disappearance of “The Two Weills”’ within *Grove* as ‘symptomatic of a now widespread malaise in editing and in lexicography’.³⁴ Drew never entirely reconciled himself with the Weill scholarship he fought so hard to establish.

I now want to take up Levitz’s question about why Weill scholarship has been motivated by apologetics and so concerned with reputation, and establish what the ‘proper’ behaviour of a composer is that Weill is meant to be rejecting.

THE PROBLEM OF THE ‘PROPER’ COMPOSER

The various objections to Weill’s American career I have documented can be summarised as the following. Firstly, Weill’s abdication of artistic control apparently denies his autonomy as a creative producer and the modernist and romantic understandings of the composer. Secondly, this rejection means that the idea of work as an individual artistic expression is seen to be irreconcilable with Weill’s practice in exile. The collaborative production process that Weill willingly enters into inescapably damages his music. Thirdly, the assumed division in Weill’s musical career challenges traditional concepts of creative progression, concepts which are supposed to be documented within a coherent “body of work.” Fourthly, Weill openly labours over his creativity; he unashamedly *works* to produce material, rather than rely or project any sense of divine inspiration. Howard Becker explains why labour is so provocative:

If the idea of gift or talent implies the notion of spontaneous expression or sublime inspiration (as it does for many), the businesslike work habits of many artists create an incongruity. Composers who produce so many bars of music a day, painters who paint so many hours a day - whether they “feel like it or not” - create some doubt as to whether they can be exercising superhuman talents.³⁵

³³ Drew, ‘Fifty Years’, (p. 8).

³⁴ Drew, ‘Fifty Years’, (p. 9).

³⁵ Howard S. Becker, *Art worlds - 25th Anniversary Edition* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), p. 18.

Weill's businesslike work habits are well-recorded; he took an evident pleasure in them. In this letter to his parents he explained in the case of *One Touch of Venus*: 'I had to make all the decisions myself, [...] and had to collaborate on the libretto, the casting, scenic designs and the entire organization of a big Broadway show as well. During the seven weeks before opening, I never slept more than 2-3 hours a night.'³⁶ Though Weill might be excused for embellishing his workload when writing to his family, he clearly involved himself in many aspects of the production process. He maintained the highly unusual practices of orchestrating his own music, and writing his own vocal arrangements and dance music. (I will discuss this further in Chapter 3.) In an obituary he wrote for Weill, Virgil Thomson described him as a 'workman who might have bridged for us the gap, as he did in Germany, between grand opera and the singspiel.'³⁷

But, it was precisely because he was a 'workman' that Weill's integrity as a composer was perceived to be damaged. In an article written one year after the obituary, Thomson straightforwardly dismissed this part of Weill's career. He suggests that after Weill came to live in America:

He ceased to work as a modernist, renounced his intellectual position, along with his lovely satirical and tender European vein. [...] His desire seems to have been to work correctly and successfully in the American commercial style. He succeeded. But he never wrote another Mahagonny. And he discouraged all attempts to produce it here. Now his commercial career is over; and his purer music [...] can shine. It gives, I assure you, a lovely light.³⁸

In this model Broadway music is presumably *impure* in contrast to the European. This extreme reaction to musicals can also be seen in Drew's description of a suspicion which he suggests has haunted Weill's reception, which I have already quoted above, that 'no composer who devoted the last

³⁶ Quoted in Hirsch, p. 233.

³⁷ Virgil Thomson, 'Music in Review, Kurt Weill', *New York Herald Tribune*, 9 April 1950', republished in *Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents*, ed. by David Farneth, Elmar Juchem and Dave Stein (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), p. 273 (p. 273).

³⁸ Virgil Thomson, 'Kurt Weill Concert', *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 February 1951, quoted in Ronald Sanders *The Days Grow Short: The Life and Music of Kurt Weill* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1980) p. 399.

years of his life to writing Broadway shows deserved, or could even have wished, to be taken seriously.’³⁹

I want to examine what it is that Weill is apparently betraying in writing musicals: the romanticised version of the composer as artist. In order to do this, I will follow the template for cultural demystification Raymond Williams has established. In his book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Williams carefully unpicks both the original definitions and the subsequent implications that have been attributed to concepts such as ‘art’, ‘taste’, ‘popular’, and ‘culture’.⁴⁰ Williams demonstrates the importance of investigating the ‘explicit but as often implicit connections’ of meaning these kinds of words have come to possess.⁴¹ Though he does not examine the term composer, Williams does trace the parallel development of artist.⁴² He argues that this term has represented ‘ever more general (and more vague) associations, offering to express a general human (i.e. non utilitarian) interest, even while, ironically, most works of art are effectively treated as commodities.’⁴³ Williams’s position is that all art produced for the market ‘involves the conception of the work of art as a commodity’, he fundamentally disputes that the romanticised version of the artist figure has any basis in reality.⁴⁴ In *The Sociology of Culture*, Williams makes a distinction between ‘cultural producers’ and the ‘recognisable social institutions’ that fund and support their existence, and the way in which producers ‘have been organised or have organised themselves, their formations’.⁴⁵ He documents the changing position of the artist within these institutions, first as the subject of patronage and then as an active participant within the market.

³⁹ Drew, ‘Weill’, (p. 302).

⁴⁰ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), ‘Art’, pp. 40-43, ‘taste’, pp. 313-315, ‘popular’, pp. 236-238, ‘culture’, pp. 87-93.

⁴¹ Williams, *Keywords*, p. 15.

⁴² Williams, *Keywords*, p. 42.

⁴³ Williams, *Keywords*, p. 42.

⁴⁴ Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), p. 44.

⁴⁵ Raymond Williams, *The Sociology of Culture* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), p. 35.

Williams identifies how patronage has operated (both historically and in contemporary terms), covering retainers and commission from the Church, protection and support, sponsorship and public patronage.⁴⁶ He follows the relationship between the artist and the market across the following phases (though they are not necessarily dependent on one another and can operate simultaneously). The first phase of interaction is the 'artisanal'.⁴⁷ Williams explains that here 'the producer is wholly dependent on the immediate market, but within its terms his work remains under its own direction at all stages.'⁴⁸ The second phase is the 'post-artisanal', which is differentiated by the appearance of the distributor and 'is typically characterised by the outright purchase of the works in question'.⁴⁹ The artist is now selling his work to the intermediary who 'invests in the purchase of a work for the purpose of profit'.⁵⁰ The next phase is that of the 'market professional'.⁵¹ Williams suggests that this can be identified by the development of copyright and royalty, and the idea of artistic ownership that lasts beyond the point of sale (an idea formalised in intellectual property law).⁵² In the final phase the artist operates as a 'corporate professional'.⁵³ By this point, the instigation of the production process has fundamentally changed:

In some earlier relations, notably those of the productive post-artisanal and the market professional, it indeed quite often happened that a work originated in the commission, for a bookseller or publisher. But in the corporate structure that has become very much more common, in relation to a highly organised and fully capitalised market in which the direct commissioning of planned saleable products has become a normal mode.⁵⁴

Williams establishes that the artist has always been involved in commodity production by revealing the historical relationship between the artist and the institution, and the exchange of the artwork for economic capital. It follows that any portrayal of the instigation of an artwork as a creation process which

⁴⁶ Williams, *Sociology*, pp. 38-44.

⁴⁷ Williams, *Sociology*, pp. 44-45.

⁴⁸ Williams, *Sociology*, pp. 44-45.

⁴⁹ Williams, *Sociology*, p. 45.

⁵⁰ Williams, *Sociology*, p. 45.

⁵¹ Williams, *Sociology*, p. 47.

⁵² Williams, *Sociology*, p. 47.

⁵³ Williams, *Sociology*, pp. 51-54.

⁵⁴ Williams, *Sociology*, p. 52.

can (or ideally should) be disconnected from its circumstances is preposterous. After all, artists will at some point need money with which to eat. Nevertheless, such a connection is what Weill is being accused of in working within a Broadway method of production. The way in which Weill openly engages with cultural production in America, by rejecting artistic autonomy, is actually *characteristic* of artist behaviour with institutions. In order to establish how the composer and institution relationship has historically operated, I will now carry out a brief survey (limited to European culture since the Renaissance).

THE COMPOSER UNDER PATRONAGE

However distasteful it may appear to those who regard the creation of works of art as an activity which should be immune from the operation of market forces, the fact remains that rights in musical works have been bought and sold in the open market in the Western world at least since the Church ceased to be the dominant employer of musicians.⁵⁵

The word 'composer' emerges at around the mid to late sixteenth century. The *OED* dates the origin of both the noun 'composer' and the verb 'to compose' to Thomas Morley's 1597 work *A Plaine And Easie Introduction To Practicall Musicke* (defined respectively as 'to invent and put into proper form' and 'one who composes music').⁵⁶ Around this point, as Robert Wegman suggests, 'ideas began to be articulated, not only about musical authorship and the distinct professional identity of composers, but also about the difference between the composition as object, on the one hand, and improvisation as a practice, on the other.'⁵⁷ Wegman notes the beginning of 'a new vernacular usage that highlights, for purposes of everyday conversation, the special

⁵⁵ Alan T. Peacock and Ronald Weir, *The Composer in the Market Place* (London: Faber, 1975), p. 14.

⁵⁶ 'compose, v.', in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, OED Online, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) <<http://0-dictionary.oed.com/catalogue.urls.lon.ac.uk/cgi/entry/50045780>> [accessed 1 January 2009].

'composer, n.', in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, OED Online, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) <<http://0-dictionary.oed.com/catalogue.urls.lon.ac.uk/cgi/entry/50045784>> [accessed 1 January 2009].

⁵⁷ Rob C. Wegman, 'From Maker to Composer: Improvisation and Musical Authorship in the Low Countries', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 49.3 (2009), 409-479 (p. 477).

significance of musical creativity and authorship.⁵⁸ During the Renaissance period, Wegman identifies the Church as the major patron of music. He notes that in the mid fifteenth century, a composer was employed to fill the role of choirmaster; which involved not only writing new music but also teaching and training his choristers.⁵⁹

Another form of patronage came from royalty, aristocracy or other privately wealthy individuals. In this situation, the composer was in effect a highly ranking domestic servant, and would be obligated to their patron in a variety of ways. They would have had to compose on request, for special events or occasions, and would generally have been expected to play an instrument to a very high standard. In the late eighteenth century, for example, Haydn was employed in the Esterházy court. In fact many of the composers who have traditionally been considered one of the Greats were also employed in this way; including Mozart, J. S. Bach, and Beethoven.⁶⁰ The reality and benefits of these positions have frequently been ignored. In the case of Haydn, Richard Carlton writes:

Our popular image of the inspired composer writing for posterity in poverty and obscurity is a Romantic legacy of the Nineteenth Century, leading us to deplore the servitude and dependence of a musical great

⁵⁸ Wegman, (p. 411).

⁵⁹ Wegman, (p. 414).

⁶⁰ For details on each of the composers see: Cliff Eisen and Stanley Sadie, 'Mozart', in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, n.d.), <<http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/subscriber/article/gr%20ove/music/40258pg3>> [accessed 14 May 2010], § Mozart: (3) Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, 3. Salzburg, 1773–80.

Walter Emery and Christoph Wolff, 'Bach', in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, July 2009) <<http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/subscriber/article/gr%20ove/music/40023pg10>> [accessed 14 May 2010], §III: (7) Johann Sebastian Bach, 2. Lüneburg.

Joseph Kerman and Alan Tyson, 'Beethoven, Ludwig van', in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, n.d.), <<http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/subscriber/article/gr%20ove/music/40026pg3>> [accessed 14 May 2010], §3: 1792–5.

such as Hayden; but this ignores the many real advantages of the Court position, which Hayden perceived and exploited.⁶¹

Haydn was indeed fortunate, as James Webster observes: 'He was no servant, but a professional employee or "house officer"; he received 400 gulden a year, plus various considerations in kind including uniforms and board at the officers' table.'⁶² For this amount, 'his duties included responsibility for the musical archives and instruments (including purchase, upkeep and repair), instruction in singing, performing both as leader and as soloist ("because [he] is competent on various instruments") – and, of course, composition.'⁶³ The acts of composition and performance were not yet entirely disconnected from one another.

THE COMPOSER ENTERS THE MARKET PLACE

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, composers began to risk the security of patronage for the chance to make their own livings directly within the marketplace. This transition was not always straightforward; Timothy King notes that in 1717, J. S. Bach had actually been imprisoned for asking to leave his patron.⁶⁴ By the time that Mozart attempted to leave his position as a *Konzertmeister* in 1781, although his request 'was very ill-received by his employer, [...] he was not forcibly prevented from leaving.'⁶⁵ Carlton explains that this politically revolutionary period provoked rapid social changes for composers, which included 'the status of Kapellmeister dissolving in favour of the new position of the touring virtuoso performer and the

⁶¹ Richard A. Carlton, 'Changes in Status and Role-Play: The Musician at the End of the Eighteenth Century', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 37.1 (2006), 3-16 (p. 7).

⁶² James Webster and Georg Feder, 'Haydn, (Franz) Joseph', in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, n.d.) <<http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/44593pg3>> [accessed 24 January 2009], §3: Esterházy, 1761-90.

⁶³ Webster and Feder, 'Haydn'.

⁶⁴ Timothy King, 'Patronage and Market in the Creation of Opera Before the Institution of Intellectual Property', *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 25 (2001), 21-45 (p. 32).

⁶⁵ King, (p. 21).

independent marketing of compositions, by subscription.⁶⁶ He suggests that by the end of the eighteenth century:

There is no longer the humble acceptance of a servant's position, but the musician's aggrandized self-perception as one worthy of respect and deference to himself. But, beyond the prestige factor, there is also a growing awareness of some autonomous possibility for the musician to work outside the court setting, in an open market.⁶⁷

THE COMPOSER AS CREATOR

It is at this point that the state of autonomy as something preferable to patronage begins to appear, accompanied by the idea of the composer as a creator rather than a craftsman. Jim Samson locates an early example of this transition in the articles E.T.A. Hoffmann wrote about Beethoven:

Characteristics that had already been attributed to art in general within philosophical aesthetics of the late 18th century – its capacity to access a plane beyond the real (variously characterized as the transcendental, the inexpressible or the infinite), its power to arouse the strongest emotions, and its value as a mode of intuitive knowledge of the world – were now particularized, referring to the individual creator and the individual (original and 'great') work of art.⁶⁸

Raymond Williams describes this abstraction of art as 'its promotion or relegation to an area of special experience'.⁶⁹ As I have touched on in Chapter 1, one of the products of this abstraction in nineteenth century romanticism is the classical canon. This canon removes a particular group of composers from the ordinary masses, projecting them into a kind of ideological greatness (invariably including Mozart, Bach, Handel, Beethoven, with perhaps the addition of Palestrina, Gluck and Haydn).⁷⁰ As a consequence of the canon's reliance on ideas of transcendence, the presence of patronage in the lives of

⁶⁶ Carlton, (p. 6.).

⁶⁷ Carlton, (p. 14).

⁶⁸ Jim Samson, 'Romanticism', in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, 2008), <<http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/23751>> [accessed 24 January 2009], §1. History of usage.

⁶⁹ Williams, *Long Revolution*, p. 39.

⁷⁰ Carl Dalhaus, *Foundations of Music History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 95.

these composers is conveniently overlooked, and the reality of the 'conception of the work of art as a commodity' is ignored.⁷¹

ROMANTICISED NOTIONS OF THE COMPOSER

The implications of notions of the composer for Weill studies have been wide ranging. The most serious is the question of authorship and creative ownership of a musical work. The compositions of a great composer are supposed to contain some sort of artistic kernel, which signifies that the work is in fact a genuine product of their individual genius or creativity. Their music transcends its material manifestation as a written copy and it is possible to read in the score evidence of this genius to validate the work. This corresponds to the idea of a composer's output as possessing inherent consistency, in which this identifying feature progressively develops through a career, ultimately establishing what can be considered as a unified body of work. Correspondingly, great importance is placed on correctly identifying and authorising particular scores as the true work of the original artist and in finding the tell-tale marks of genius embedded within them.

In the case of some composers, this obsession with telling a genuine score (with its inherent genius) apart from a work by an apparently lesser artist has been a major preoccupation for musicologists. A good example of this is the case of Josquin Des Prez. Paula Higgins writes that 'proceeding from the *a priori* assumption of Josquin's genius, the trope of creative "perfection" becomes the overriding criterion for making "objective" determinations about the authenticity of a given piece; authenticity and perfection thus become mutually constitutive.'⁷² Where works are perceived to be flawed, Higgins suggests that this is attributed either to 'conflicting attribution' which may lead to the 'argument for disattribution', or from a 'perception of some "flaw", "deficiency", "weakness", or "anomaly."' ⁷³

⁷¹ Williams, *Long Revolution*, p. 44.

⁷² Paula Higgins, 'The Apotheosis of Josquin des Prez and Other Mythologies of Musical Genius', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 57.3 (2004), 443-510 (p. 467).

⁷³ Higgins, (p. 469).

There is a purely practical problem in such assumptions. As Stanley Boorman reminds us: 'a text, as notated, is not actually the musical work: music exists as sound; it fills time rather than space; and it is normally perceived as sound-in-time (whether from an external source or within our own heads).'74 The idea that the written record of notated music contains the truth of the work is both simplistic and inaccurate. Boorman identifies that:

We impute to most composers at their desks, to most copyists and most printers, a sensitivity to nuance that is almost entirely a twentieth-century phenomenon. There is no reason to assume that earlier composers favoured such an approach to the notated text; nor is there any reason to believe that the performer felt bound by such nuances as appear in that text.⁷⁵

Despite all evidence to the contrary, this narrative denies the contribution of the performer, privileging the artistic autonomy which is seen to transcend the collaboration of performance. Artistic genius can therefore be "found" in the written record, as opposed to in the performance. Unsurprisingly, Boorman argues that the 'concept of authenticity in sources' is deeply unsound.⁷⁶ There have been contrasting views about the location of authenticity within sources. Composer and theorist Ferruccio Busoni, who was for a period Weill's teacher, held a conservative position on the genius of the composer, but believed that this genius could only be accessed through performance. Jim Samson explains that for Busoni, the composer's intentions were 'imperfectly reflected in the text but could be accessed by the inspired performer through the text'.⁷⁷ The performance of the text, rather than the written work, was 'closer to the "ideal form" of the work'.⁷⁸ Busoni's position is radical while simultaneously reinforcing romantic notions of creation and genius that somehow reside within the musical work. The composer's genius lives on in the text and can be accessed through performance. Though Busoni can be seen to connect with

⁷⁴ Stanley Boorman, 'The Musical Text', in *Rethinking Music*, ed. by Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp. 403-423 (p. 420).

⁷⁵ Boorman, (p. 420).

⁷⁶ Boorman, (p. 420).

⁷⁷ Jim Samson, 'The Practice of Early-Nineteenth-Century Pianism', in *Liverpool Music Symposium I, The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?*, ed. by Michael Talbot (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 110-127 (p. 126).

⁷⁸ Samson, 'Pianism', (p. 126).

Barthes's later emphasis on the activity of production, the Author remains present in Busoni's theory, and is effectively conjured through performance.⁷⁹

These concepts have been confirmed in the scholarly activities of musicology. Bruno Nettl argues that 'musicology, as an institution, has fostered particular methods and practices, beyond simply engaging in "the scholarly study of music."' ⁸⁰ He suggests that these 'shared beliefs' involve 'the integrity of periods, the insights one can gain from biography, the overwhelming validity of chronological approaches, and the significance of using the works of a single composer.'⁸¹ Barthes's exploration of music and biography around the life of Beethoven is pertinent here:

The artist is in search of his 'truth' and this quest forms an order in itself, a message that can be read, in spite of the variations in its content, over all the work or, at least, whose readability feeds on a sort of totality off the artist: his career, his loves, his ideas, his character, his words become traits of meaning; a Beethovenian biography is born (one ought to be able to say a bio-mythology), the artist is brought forward as a complete hero, endowed with a discourse (a rare occurrence for a musician), a legend (a good ten or so anecdotes), an iconography, a race (that of the Titans of Art: Michelangelo, Balzac) and a fatal malady (the deafness of he who creates for the pleasure of our ears).⁸²

This emphasis can be clearly observed in Weill studies – not only was biography the major area of publication for many years, but its influence can also be seen in recent narratives around the composer. Weill's 'bio-mythology' does not render him a complete hero, but instead an inherently divided figure. This division can perhaps be seen to be his 'fatal malady', the need to rectify his multiple identities as a kind of treatment. The form of biography suggested a progressive narrative in the life of the subject. Jolanta Pekacz notes that as a form, biography develops 'in a way similar to a realistic

⁷⁹ [Emphasis in original.] Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in *Image – Music – Text*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1984), pp. 155-164 (p. 157).

⁸⁰ Bruno Nettl, 'The Institutionalization of Musicology: Perspectives of a North American Ethnomusicologist', in *Rethinking Music*, ed. by Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp. 287-310 (p. 308).

⁸¹ Nettl, (p. 308).

⁸² Roland Barthes, 'Musica Practica', in *Image – Music – Text*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1984), pp. 149-154 (p. 151).

novel'.⁸³ Pekacz argues that this creates a 'coherent, unified voice claiming to present the truth about a life; omniscient narration, repeating themes and symbols; and a linear, chronological presentation of events provide readers with the illusion of totality and closure.'⁸⁴ Biographies inherently over-emphasize the individual over the method of production, confirming and continuing notions of the artist. In the case of Weill studies, the product of this has been an overriding concern with solving the puzzle of the composer's identity.

The presence of the individual author figure in and over their work cannot be considered without recalling Barthes's article 'The Death of the Author'. This concept has already been applied in musicology as a theoretical model for dismantling the traditional closed relationship between the composer and their work.⁸⁵ Barthes's conclusion is particularly relevant here; he suggests that by removing the author, 'there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*.'⁸⁶ There are two possibilities here: firstly, by removing the authority of the fixed author, the moment of performance is the moment of production and must be read as such; secondly, that music exists through a series of collaborations between, at the very least, the composer, performer, and audience. I want to take up the second possibility, and suggest that the authorship awarded to the composer is a by-product of the masking of the capitalist system of music production. The need to separate artistic practice from other kinds of production has attributed special qualities to the artist and placed particular requirements on their activities.

It is important to reiterate that my thesis is itself implicitly privileging the author by focusing on Weill's particular contribution. However, by repeatedly

⁸³ Jolanta Pekacz, 'Memory, History and Meaning: Musical Biography and its Discontents', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 23: 1 (2004), 39-80 (p. 42).

⁸⁴ Pekacz, (p. 42).

⁸⁵ There have been other interpretations of Barthes's 'Death of the Author' in connection to the composer. For example, see Jos de Mul, *Romantic Desire in (Post)modern Art and Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), §6 The Oldest Nobility in the World (pp. 195-230).

⁸⁶ Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image – Music – Text*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1984), pp. 142-148 (p. 145).

referring to the complex multiple agencies that operate around Weill, and by acknowledging the inherent irony in this study, I would argue that this thesis moves beyond what might otherwise have been a limited focus on the author. In any case, it bears repeating that Weill's activities in exile demonstrate the inherent fiction of the supposed qualities and virtues of autonomy, and the processes through which music is produced. Charles Hamm suggests (though reserving some conservatism around the role of composition) that:

Music exists as a three-fold series of processes: a first stage of creation, or composition; a middle stage of mediation, involving publication, production, performance, and dissemination; and a final one of reception and perception.⁸⁷

The instigation or invention of music is only a small aspect of its method of production, and in the case of Weill and the musical, I want to examine this wider series of processes as a whole. Before doing this, I want to consider Adorno's account of Weill as *Musikregisseur*, a model which I will suggest will enable the romanticised composer-figure to be avoided.

ADORNO ON WEILL

The obituary Adorno wrote in Germany for Weill has been seen as the beginning of a wider denunciation of the composer and his American work. Foster Hirsch writes that 'Adorno dismissed Weill as a deluded artist who had tried to convince himself that he could function as a serious composer within a commercial arena and from Adorno's elitist perspective, had inevitably failed.'⁸⁸ Kim Kowalke argues that it was one of the first blows to Weill's posthumous reputation:

T. W. Adorno suggested that 'the profile of this composer, who died in America, can hardly be encompassed by the concept of a composer at all.' Thereby, Adorno implied that Weill's individual works, his total output, and his compositional evolution lacked the organic unity, stylistic progression, and internal consistency expected of a genuine composer.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Charles Hamm, 'Privileging the moment of reception: music and radio in South Africa', in *Music and Text: Critical Enquiries*, ed. by Steven Paul Scher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 21-37 (p. 21).

⁸⁸ Hirsch, p. 345.

⁸⁹ Kowalke, 'Kurt Weill, Modernism', (p. 29).

I want to propose however that this obituary is neither as concerned with the idea of the 'genuine composer' as Kowalke suggests, or as dismissive as Hirsch implies. At first glance the obituary might appear to be entirely concerned with measuring Weill against the same ideal model of a composer (which I have unpicked above). It opens with the statement that Kowalke disputes (in German 'Die Figur des Komponisten, der in Amerika starb, wird vom Begriff des Kompositen kaum recht getroffen.')⁹⁰ There is an inherent ambiguity in the German text; 'kaum recht getroffen' could be translated as 'to hardly square' or 'hardly meet up with'. This suggests that the entire sentence means something more along the lines of 'hardly squares with the definition of composer' or 'the term composer is hardly an accurate description'. It is not automatically negative, particularly when placed with the description of Weill that follows it: 'Er verkörperte mit Flair, Beweglichkeit und einem sehr spezifischen Ausdruckston einen neuen Typus: den des Musikregisseurs.'⁹¹ Adorno's use of *Musikregisseur* is not unproblematic; it could be translated as music director and it does carry contemporary connotations of music technician. Kowalke argues that this term is used to imply that Weill is 'not a real composer, but [... is] comparable to the jazz arranger, making music to fit the contingencies of the situation.'⁹² Stephen Hinton believes that the implication is that 'in America the Musikregisseur's willingness to make the music meet theatrical demands turned into nothing but conformity, obedience.'⁹³

I want to draw attention to how *Musikregisseur* is introduced in the obituary, and to suggest that this changes its meaning from Kowalke and Hinton's

⁹⁰ All of the German quotes and translations that follow are from the obituary itself. Though in individual cases using German outside of its context might occasionally mean the correct case is lost, it is necessary to refer back to the original language as well as the translation. This translation was commissioned specifically for this thesis. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Kurt Weill – Musiker des epischen Theaters', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 15 April 1950, unpublished trans. by Jeremy Sams, 2008.

⁹¹ Adorno, 'Kurt Weill'.

⁹² Kowalke, 'Kurt Weill, Modernism', (p. 55).

⁹³ Stephen Hinton, 'Hindemith and Weill - Cases of "Inner" and "Other" Direction', in *Driven into Paradise: the Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, ed. by Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 261-278 (p. 262).

negative interpretations. Adorno qualifies the expression with the characteristics of 'Flair, Beweglichkeit und einem sehr spezifischen Ausdruckston.'⁹⁴ This passage could be read as, 'by dint of flair, panache, and a very specific expressive voice of his own, he came to embody a new sort of person – a theatre director who used music as his medium.' Might it be possible to read this obituary as something other than a straight condemnation? Though this obituary has been traditionally seen as a dismissal of the composer, I want to propose instead that it offers the beginning of a different model with which to approach Weill.

It is important to note the inherent ambiguities in Adorno's language, which I would suggest are not accidental. The obituary is extremely difficult to translate; its meaning is obfuscated even for those who speak German as a first language. What is clear, and perhaps surprising, is that there is no sense of 'Two Weills' here. Adorno did believe that Weill's greatest achievement was his collaboration with Brecht. It follows then that Adorno was disappointed by the entirety of Weill's subsequent career; he sees this apparent demise beginning in Germany, stating that *Die Bürgschaft* was the 'most pretentious' of Weill's grand operas. He suggests that the inadequacies of this piece, which he claims Weill must have been aware of, facilitated Weill's giving way to the pressures and enticements of exile ('dem Zwang und der Lockung des Exils').⁹⁵ The chronology here is slightly confusing: *Bürgschaft* (which premiered in March 1932) came some time before Weill's exile. Adorno argues that Weill persuaded himself that 'the concessions of commercial enterprise' ('die Konzessionen an den kommerziellen Betrieb') were little more than a 'Test des "Könners"'. (This could be translated variously as 'a test of his abilities' or 'a test of the expert'.) Adorno concedes rather poignantly that Weill's American music occasionally 'brought you up short when you turned the radio on.' There is no disputing that Adorno felt that Weill's collaborations after Brecht were of inferior quality, but I am less concerned with his value judgements than with the model of the composer he establishes.

⁹⁴ Adorno, 'Kurt Weill'.

⁹⁵ Adorno, 'Kurt Weill'.

Adorno repeatedly implies continuity between the German and American Weill. He notes that throughout his career '[Weill] made, perforce, a virtue of his specific creative power, by subordinating it to the purpose of the work at hand, be it artistic, or to a lesser extent political.'⁹⁶ Adorno's profound discomfort with commercial music is less important, and for my purposes less useful, than his description of the way in which Weill worked. He proposes that Weill moved the process of composing to the rehearsal room. He compares Weill with Offenbach, suggesting that they were both attached to the period in which they worked. While Offenbach 'handled the musical material of his time in a colourful and sophisticated manner and in many ways set it free', Weill dealt with his 'in an arbitrary and fragile way, in order to hold tight the effect which the spirit of the time seemed to demand.' Adorno notes that Weill had something of a journalistic connection with this spirit, which meant that his work was already dated, even by the time of his death. The suggestion is that the contemporaneity of Weill's work irreconcilably attaches it to the period within which it was written. This is Adorno's enduring image of Weill, not a composer ruined by Broadway but as a theatrical practitioner, a new kind of creative producer.

Adorno proposes a figure whose creative activity occurs within specific collaborations for a specific audience, in a specific time. This idea can be found in Weill's own writings. This particular example is from an interview conducted by William King:

Schoenberg, for example, has said he is writing for a time fifty years after his death. But the great 'classic' composers wrote for their contemporary audiences. They wanted those who heard their music to understand it, and they did. As for myself, I write for today. I don't give a damn about writing for posterity.⁹⁷

David Ewen, in another interview with Weill, explained this idea to his reader in 1937:

⁹⁶ Adorno, 'Kurt Weill'.

⁹⁷ William G. King, 'Music and Musicians: Composer for the Theater - Kurt Weill Talks About "Practical Music"', *New York Sun*, 3 February 1940 <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/353-composer-for-the-theater>> [accessed 6 October 2008].

Weill's explanation lies in what he terms 'Zeitkunst', which colloquially, we might call 'timeliness'. Art, says Weill, should be contemporary in theme and in appeal. Its roots should be embedded in modern subjects, it must be the expression of the 'modern' spirit.⁹⁸

Adorno's recognition that Weill was primarily a collaborative practitioner who used music as his medium, and that Weill brought the process of composing into the rehearsal room, is particularly useful. His concept of Weill facilitates the cultural materialist methodology I am proposing, based on the work of Ric Knowles. It enables the recognition of the full range of Weill's activities, locating him outside the limitations of the word composer. Adorno's model of the *Musikregisseur* is not only an accurate recognition of Weill's working practices, but also illuminates Weill's own description of the composer as dramatist.

WEILL IN THE MUSICAL'S HISTORIOGRAPHY

I want to consider the role Weill is seen to play in the historiography of the musical. Though Weill is widely seen as important, he is rarely discussed at length. What should perhaps come as no surprise is that much of the same vocabulary used about the serious musical can be found in references to Weill's American work. He is perceived to be musical theatre's most 'accomplished craftsman'⁹⁹; a "'serious" musician' who engaged with a less serious form.¹⁰⁰ Even Scott McMillin locates Weill alongside other 'serious musicians [...] who would continue the musical's advance into challenging plots with a hope of mainstream profitable runs.'¹⁰¹ In musical theatre literature then Weill is seen to bring legitimacy to the musical form. Ethan Mordden suggests that because Weill wrote his own orchestrations and dance arrangements for *One Touch of Venus*, 'musical comedy was suddenly in

⁹⁸ David Ewen, 'Musical Modernist', *Cue*, 5.13, 23 January 1937, pp. 6-7, 44-45, <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/351-musical-modernist>> [accessed 15 May 2010].

⁹⁹ Cecil Smith and Glenn Litton, *Musical Comedy in America* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1981), p. 194.

¹⁰⁰ Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 11.

¹⁰¹ Scott McMillin, *The Musical as Drama: A Study of the Principles and Conventions Behind Musical Shows from Kern to Sondheim* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 20.

command of a surge of “legit” sound; the full score of such works was no longer a string of songs handed over to others for scoring, dance interpolations, and incidental music.’¹⁰² Leonard Bernstein makes a particular point in referencing Weill’s European background (as part of his attempt to legitimise the musical which we have already examined). He points out that ‘Weill brought his whole German training to Broadway in such works as *Lady in the Dark*’.¹⁰³

In many histories of the American musical, Weill is discussed more for his collaborations with Brecht and the perceived impact of their work on the ‘concept musical’ than for his work on Broadway. Richard Kislán suggests that ‘the[ir] musicals [...] personify the alternative to the integrated musical theatre philosophy of Rodgers and Hammerstein.’¹⁰⁴ Weill is frequently cited as the primary influence on *The Cradle Will Rock*.¹⁰⁵ Raymond Knapp also suggests that the origins of *Cabaret* (1966) as the first concept musical can be located in Brecht and Weill’s collaborative work.¹⁰⁶ Joanne Gordon mentions Weill in reference to Sondheim, suggests that the introduction of ‘thematic depth and social relevance’ in the 1930s can be connected to Weill, who, she says: ‘realized that Broadway was the heart of American theatre and adapted his political commitment to its idiom.’¹⁰⁷ Weill is often seen as a forerunner of Sondheim. J. Bradford Robinson notes Weill’s ‘special place in history as a

¹⁰² Ethan Mordden, *Better Foot Forward: The History of American Musical Theatre* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1976), p. 210.

¹⁰³ Leonard Bernstein, ‘American Musical Comedy’, broadcast on 7 October 1956 in Leonard Bernstein, *The Joy of Music* (London: Panther Books, 1969), pp. 157-184 (p. 178).

¹⁰⁴ Richard Kislán, *The Musical: A Look at the American Musical Theatre*, rev. ed. (New York: Applause, 1995), p. 203.

¹⁰⁵ See Lehman Engel, *The American Musical Theater*, rev. edn (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1975), p. 148; Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 110-18; Ethan Mordden, *Beautiful Mornin’: The Broadway Musical in the 1940s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 144.

¹⁰⁶ Though it should be noted that others suggest Weill’s American work is the beginning of this form. See Stephen Banfield, *Sondheim’s Broadway Musicals* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 147-148.

¹⁰⁷ Joanne Gordon, *Art Isn’t Easy: The Achievement of Stephen Sondheim* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), p. 1.

precursor of Bernstein and Sondheim'.¹⁰⁸ Mordden notes: 'Weill liked to make musicals not with insiders but with adventurers. His plan was to create new forms *every time he wrote*; [...] only Stephen Sondheim has followed Weill's lead.'¹⁰⁹

Weill is seen to bridge the gap between artistic legitimacy and popular culture. The *Cambridge Companion to the Musical* includes an article on Weill entitled 'Musical Sophistication on Broadway', suggesting that Weill and Bernstein challenged 'Broadway's prevailing norms and produce some of the more artistically influential musicals of the 1940s and 1950s.'¹¹⁰ Ethan Mordden makes yet another variation of the 'Two Weills' concept by suggesting that 'there are two Weills (among others), one of the savage German shows, the other (from *Knickerbocker Holiday* on) an Americanized and Broadwayized composer, though Broadway was in its turn Weillized.'¹¹¹

WEILL RESOURCES

The most recent survey of Weill literature was carried out in 2000, as part of the centenary celebrations of the composer's birth, in a special issue of *Theater*. It was conducted by Bruce McClung, and remains the most complete assessment of the field.¹¹² McClung examines the literature in terms of biographies, collections of essays, critical approaches to Weill's European music, handbooks, academic writing in German, and selected writings by Weill, so it is not necessary to repeat that work here. Instead, I want to give an overview of the consequences of the Two Weills mythology on this literature, and to examine the approaches that move beyond this concept.

¹⁰⁸ Robinson, 'Weill, Kurt (Julian)', §4. American Works.

¹⁰⁹ Mordden, *Beautiful Mornin'*, p. 228.

¹¹⁰ Bruce D. McClung and Paul R. Laird, 'Musical Sophistication on Broadway: Kurt Weill and Leonard Bernstein', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, ed. by William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 167-178 (p. 178).

¹¹¹ Ethan Mordden, *Broadway Babies: The People Who Made the American Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 223.

¹¹² Bruce D. McClung, 'From Myth to Monograph: Weill Scholarship, Fifty Years After', *Theater*, 30.3 (2000), 107-117.

BIOGRAPHIES OF WEILL

mcclung notes that 'fifty years after his death there is still no authoritative scholarly biography on Weill'.¹¹³ At the time of his article there were four English language biographies, all of which necessarily take a position on the 'Two Weills'.¹¹⁴ The earliest was Ronald Sanders's *The Days Grow Short: The Life and Music of Kurt Weill* (1980).¹¹⁵ mcclung suggests that although it is 'an engagingly written life-and-works study', it is 'hampered by the paucity of available primary sources in the 1970s'.¹¹⁶ Sanders takes a decidedly forward-thinking position on the dualistic concept, initially putting forward a multitude of Weills, (German, American, French and English) since the composer 'managed to write some music that sounds typical of the host country'.¹¹⁷ Ultimately he suggests unity, one composer who could be possibly understood as 'a Mozart of Broadway'.¹¹⁸

Douglas Jarman's biography of Weill, published two years after that of Sanders, relies on a more disconnected concept of the composer.¹¹⁹ Jarman follows Drew's approach, and broadly dismisses the American work as unimportant: 'the American pieces are rarely less than the works of a skilled and totally professional craftsman. Even at their best, however, they are works of a kind that could have been written by a number of competent Broadway composers'.¹²⁰ mcclung remarks, Jarman 'rehearses the "two Weill" theory to death'.¹²¹ The next two biographies both emphasised Weill's European music over his American.¹²² Jürgen Schebera particularly emphasises a division in Weill's identity; he notes Weill's 'decision to break with Germany and

¹¹³ mcclung, 'From Myth', (p. 110).

¹¹⁴ The first popular biography was published in German in 1962. Hellmut Kotschenreuther, *Kurt Weill* (Berlin-Halensee: M. Hesses, 1962).

¹¹⁵ Ronald Sanders, *The Days Grow Short: The Life and Music of Kurt Weill* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1980).

¹¹⁶ mcclung, 'From Myth', (p. 109).

¹¹⁷ Sanders, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ Sanders, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ Douglas Jarman, *Kurt Weill: an Illustrated Biography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

¹²⁰ Jarman, *Kurt Weill*, p. 138.

¹²¹ mcclung, 'From Myth', (p. 109).

¹²² Ronald Taylor, *Kurt Weill: Composer in a Divided World* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992). Jürgen Schebera, *Kurt Weill: An Illustrated Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

henceforth seek new artistic expression had quickly led to a determination not only to apply for citizenship but to become an American in thought, feeling and speech.¹²³

Foster Hirsch's biography, *Kurt Weill on Stage*, was published shortly after mcclung's article in 2002.¹²⁴ Hirsch positions himself against the Two Weills model, suggesting instead continuity: 'properly to measure Weill's accomplishment, the nagging, simplistic contrast between the European Kurt Weill, austere, rigorous avant-gardist, and the American Kurt Weill, Broadway boulevardier, must be abandoned once and for all.'¹²⁵ Hirsch is concerned however with Weill's 'musical identity' and the 'shift from classicist to populist'.¹²⁶ Hirsch gives fairly equal coverage to the work produced in Europe and America, and although his book is a significant advance on the earlier biographies, it is not, nor does it set out to be, a critical or purely academic examination of Weill's career.

As I have already established, the form of the biography reiterates ways of thinking about Weill that rely on romanticised notions of the composer. The form perpetuates ideas about the superiority of the artist as a creative individual, while detracting from the reality of collaborative production methods. I have repeatedly noted that there is a danger of this thesis falling into the same trap. However, I would counter that by using a wider methodology, and placing information within a framework that enables its consideration within the relevant context, it is possible to acknowledge and therefore avoid such an emphasis.

CRITICAL APPROACHES TO WEILL

In his survey, mcclung delineates the various myths which have formed around the composer and that 'persist in the burgeoning field of Weill studies'.¹²⁷ He lists them as the following: Brecht was the major partner of the two; Brecht-Weill works were intended for singing actors only; without

¹²³ Schebera, p. 296.

¹²⁴ Hirsch.

¹²⁵ Hirsch, p. 351.

¹²⁶ Hirsch, p. 4.

¹²⁷ mcclung, 'From Myth', (p. 109).

Brecht, Weill's music is sentimental; Weill's music originates from cabaret; Weill planned all his work for Lenya; 'art' and 'popular' are interchangeable for European and American respectively; Weill's composition practices changed in America; Weill sold out to Broadway and Weill's American work was formulaic.¹²⁸ In the ten years since McClung's essay, although there has been considerable growth in the field, particularly in publications of collected essays, there continues to be a preoccupation with many of these 'myths'. There has been an emphasis on studies which focus on the composer's identity, which are clearly, as I have suggested a product of the 'Two Weills' mythology.

Initial scholarship on Weill had a particular focus in attempting to rectify the 'ill-informed and cursory treatment of Weill in much of the last literature on Bertolt Brecht'.¹²⁹ There was an emphasis on proving the composer's work to be a valid area of study, and correspondingly, an 'increasing acceptance within the scholarly community of Weill's importance'.¹³⁰ These early attempts to prove Weill's value have been analysed; Michael Gilbert, in his review of the first edited collection of essays on Weill notes, explains that:

In making a case for Kurt Weill (in itself a justifiable endeavour), the book's editor, [...] ultimately leaves the reader hoping that Weill's work, once its full dimensions have been clarified and rightful place established, will be given the opportunity to speak for itself rather than be spoken for so protectively.¹³¹

Weill's work post-1935 remained problematic for academics; Kowalke noted that 'in the past, few *musical* scholars have been attracted to either analytical or rigorous historical study of the repertoire of American musical theatre.'¹³²

Ideas about high and low art can frequently be found alongside concerns over Weill's rejection of artistic autonomy. Matthew Scott, for example, suggests

¹²⁸ McClung, 'From Myth', (p. 110).

¹²⁹ Kim Kowalke, 'Editor's Preface' in *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*, ed. by Kim Kowalke (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. ix-xvi (p. xii).

¹³⁰ Kowalke, 'Preface', (p. ix).

¹³¹ Michael Gilbert, 'Review: Of Related Interest', *Theatre Journal*, 40 (1988), 136-137 (p. 136).

¹³² [Emphasis in original.] Kowalke, 'Editor's Preface', (p. xiii).

that Weill 'had to choose between a 'serious' and 'vernacular' future'.¹³³ Scott finds the musical's method of the production damaging to the potential quality of Weill's musical material. He writes that after the commercial success of *Lady in the Dark*:

There were increasing numbers of people holding stakes in his decisions: backers wanted to hear show tunes which were exploitable as potential hits outside of any theatrical vehicle; performers wanted roles which were both demanding and convincing; and collaborators demanded both of the above, together with whatever limited degree of self-expression they permitted themselves.¹³⁴

Scott's objection to collaborative working practices closely echoes David Drew's; without autonomy Weill's creativity is weakened. Scott also makes the point that Weill's post-1935 material forms 'a bewildering lot, unconnected and academically imponderable; a series of experiments, some good, some bad.'¹³⁵ (The implication is that artistic value is a prerequisite for academic study, which is an assertion I would obviously dispute.)

Even as the field developed, the 'Two Weills' problem remained an issue. In his preface to a collection of essays titled *Amerikanismus, Americanism*, Kim Kowalke proposes that Weill's multiple identities can be understood best through Walt Whitman's words in *Leaves of Grass*: 'Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself. I am vast, I contain multitudes.'¹³⁶ Kowalke suggests Weill can be understood as a 'Whitman composer':

If Weill had remained stable – culturally, politically, musically, aesthetically, geographically – he would have been faithful to neither the Brechtian nor the Whitmanian. Nor to his own identity, which is encompassing enough to include both Brecht and Whitman, *Amerikanismus* and *Americanism*, the Old World and the New, German and Jewish cultural heritages – and much more.¹³⁷

¹³³ Matthew Scott, 'Weill in America: The Problem of Revival', in *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*, ed. by Kim Kowalke (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 285–295 (p. 291).

¹³⁴ Scott, 'Weill in America', (p. 292).

¹³⁵ Scott, 'Weill in America', (p. 293).

¹³⁶ Walt Whitman, 'Song of Myself', from *Leaves of Grass*, (Stanza 51) quoted in Kowalke, 'Amerika/ America', (p. 15).

¹³⁷ Kowalke, 'Amerika/ America', (p. 15).

Other writers have taken up Kowalke's suggestion; for example, Jack Sullivan also uses the multitudes model: '[Weill] existed in Whitman's eternal "now", an uncompromising present moment that refused to look back or dwell on the past. For Whitman and Twain, looking back was spiritual death; for Weill, in flight from the Nazis, it was a literal one as well.'¹³⁸

Kowalke has explored the links between the poet and the composer several times, reiterating the concept of a 'Whitman composer' with multiple and conflicting identities.¹³⁹ The concept reconciles the 'Two Weills' with each other; Weill is apparently capable of accepting multiple and even conflicting identities, he writes that 'Weill could be recognised as a prototype of the 'crossover' composer, straddling real or imagined aesthetic, geographic and linguistic boundaries.'¹⁴⁰ Whitman had been an important figure for a number of composers, including Weill, during the *Amerikanismus* trend in Germany during the 1920s (which I will comment on in more detail in the next chapter). Kowalke explores Weill's later setting of Whitman's works during World War II, suggesting that this work 'can be understood only in light of his determination to participate actively in the struggle of his new nation against his former homeland.'¹⁴¹ Kowalke uses the connection with Whitman as a framework with which to view Weill's acceptance of an American identity (both metaphorically and in becoming a citizen). He concludes that:

Nowhere within the private or public documentation that Weill left behind at the time of his untimely death in 1950 is there a scrap of paper or shred of other evidence that Weill's American identity had

¹³⁸ Sullivan, (p. 205).

¹³⁹ Kowalke makes this point in a number of essays. See:

Kim H. Kowalke, Jurgen Schebera, Christian Kuhnt, and Alexander L. Ringer, 'The Eternal Road and Kurt Weill's German, Jewish, and American Identity', *Theater*, 30.3 (2000), 83-95 (p. 85, 87). Kim Kowalke, 'Reading Whitman/Responding to America: Hindemith, Weill, and Others', in *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, ed. by Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1999), pp. 194-222 (p. 201).

Kim Kowalke, "'I'm an American!'" Whitman, Weill, and Cultural Identity', in *Walt Whitman and Modern Music: War, Desire, and the Trials of Nationhood*, ed. by Lawrence Kramer (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), pp. 109-131.

¹⁴⁰ Kim Kowalke, 'Hin und Zurück: Kurt Weill at 90', *The Musical Times*, 131 (1990), 188-192 (p. 191).

¹⁴¹ Kowalke, 'Reading Whitman', (p. 201).

been 'scripted' as a mask for suppressed convictions or genuine self. If his American identity was only a role, Weill played it so convincingly that it became his only reality. If it was self-deception, it was total.¹⁴²

Reconciling Weill's identities has been a particular focus of recent Weill scholarship. Christian Kuhnt, for example, has carried out considerable work studying Weill's Jewish identity.¹⁴³ He argues: 'Kurt Weill's life story shows us that confrontation with one's own Jewish identity does not necessarily occur in a consistent, straightforward manner. The process is multifaceted and individualized.'¹⁴⁴ This emphasis on Weill's identity is also present more generally within exile studies where, as I have already suggested, Weill is viewed as an exception to the dominant narrative.

Exile historian Jean Palmier notes that exiles experienced 'conflicting feelings' when confronted with American culture and its 'mode of operation'.¹⁴⁵ He suggests that:

Some of [the exiles] lived their exile as one long nightmare (Alfred Döblin), others managed to adapt, even to rival American creators on their own ground (Kurt Weill). Finally, the majority of émigrés were torn between a wish to profit from the system they despised, and a desire not to alienate themselves in it. [...] They all wondered how far they could go in this collaboration without betraying themselves.¹⁴⁶

Bryan Gilliam counters that the 'prevailing historical narrative' which focuses on the losses of exile has had profound consequences: 'Although this generalised picture has a certain truth value its reductive paradigm ignores émigrés for whom the United States indeed represented a realm of potential.'¹⁴⁷ I would suggest that this exile narrative has contributed to the need to reconcile Weill's apparently exceptional actions in embracing

¹⁴² Kowalke, "'I'm an American!'", (p. 124).

¹⁴³ See footnote 139 and Christian Kuhnt, *Kurt Weill und das Judentum* (Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2002).

¹⁴⁴ Christian Kuhnt and others, 'The Eternal Road', (p. 87).

¹⁴⁵ Jean Palmier, *Weimar in Exile: The Antifascist Emigration in Europe and America* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 507.

¹⁴⁶ Palmier, p. 507.

¹⁴⁷ Bryan Gilliam, 'Korngold's Double Exile', in *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, ed. by Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1999), pp. 223-242 (pp. 224-225).

American cultural industries, and I will consider this further in the next chapter.

One key example of the emphasis on Weill as an exception to the normal pattern within exile studies, is the musicology focused collection of articles, *Driven into Paradise* (1999). This book concentrates on musicians and composers exiled from Nazi Germany to the United States. Within it, Stephen Hinton's paper is a response to Adorno's framing of Weill. He proposes 'an alternative model of interpretation, [to Adorno's] according to which Weill as a composer can be seen to find fulfilment in the United States.'¹⁴⁸ He compares exile for Weill and the contemporaneous experience of Paul Hindemith, exploring their different approaches to cultural industries in America. He suggests that Weill 'was more pragmatic than Hindemith, less concerned about continuity and consistency within his oeuvre.'¹⁴⁹ He argues that Weill could helpfully be seen as 'other-directed' (borrowing from 1950s psycho-analytic terminology), a quality which supposedly manifests itself in an individual's relationship to 'their contemporaries', who provide a 'source of direction', these contemporaries can be 'either those known to him or those with whom he is indirectly acquainted, through friends and through the mass media.'¹⁵⁰ This is in contrast to 'inner-directed' man, who is 'very considerably bound by traditions; they limit his ends and inhibits his choice of means'.¹⁵¹ Hinton argues that the majority of exile literature has been based in studies of inner-directed artists, as opposed to the outer-directed type, which 'suggests another, quite different experience which ultimately subverts the very notion of "exile"'.¹⁵²

In this same collection, two articles focus on the idea of duality in reference to Weill, written by Hermann Danuser and Lydia Goehr. Danuser contrasts

¹⁴⁸ Hinton, 'Hindemith and Weill', (p. 263).

¹⁴⁹ Hinton, 'Hindemith and Weill', (p. 268)

¹⁵⁰ David Riesman (in collaboration with Reuel Denney and Nathan Glazer), *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 22, quoted in Hinton, 'Hindemith and Weill', (p. 272).

¹⁵¹ Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, p. 16, quoted in Hinton, 'Hindemith and Weill', (p. 269).

¹⁵² Hinton, 'Hindemith and Weill', (p. 271).

composers of “‘autonomous” orientation’ and “‘functional” orientation’ with particular reference to Stravinsky and Weill respectively.¹⁵³ He asks whether Weill can be thought of as ‘one and the same artistic person or [...] in terms of two distinct personalities.’¹⁵⁴ Danuser writes that trying to find a ‘simple spiritual or intellectual, musical-aesthetic continuity in the lives of exiled musicians’ is unhelpful.¹⁵⁵ Goehr builds on this by attempting to formalise the concept of ‘doubleness’ as a framework for studying exiled composers. She argues that the ‘doubleness involved in this frontier life has had numerous expressions of a musical, historical, aesthetic, and metaphysical sort.’¹⁵⁶ The continued need to understand and explain Weill’s identity in this way is problematic. It recalls Levitz’s remark in the *Grove* article on the presence of a ‘colonialist binary logic that requires that Weill remain true to one culture or another’.¹⁵⁷ The constantly implied question is: “how could Weill be true to this or that identity, while being true to all the others?” I would suggest that the real question, to paraphrase Levitz, is why has the literature been so motivated by questions of identity in the first place?

I would argue that the answer is that without an outright dismissal of romanticised aesthetic concepts around Weill, these ideas still dominate discussion. Even the most revolutionary aspect of Weill scholarship can be seen to stumble over the authority and autonomy of the composer. (I have repeatedly suggested that this is a risk this thesis itself faces, and would again maintain that recognition of the irony goes some way to rectifying the situation.)

¹⁵³ Hermann Danuser, ‘Composers in Exile – The Question of Musical Identity’, in *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, ed. by Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 155-157 (p. 159).

¹⁵⁴ Danuser, (p. 159).

¹⁵⁵ Danuser, (p. 166).

¹⁵⁶ Lydia Goehr, ‘Music and Musicians in Exile: The Romantic Legacy of a Double Life’, in *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, ed. by Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff, (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles: 1999), pp. 66-91 (p. 68).

¹⁵⁷ Levitz, (p. 9)

LITERATURE ON WEILL'S AMERICAN WORKS

The most significant developments in American Weill scholarship in the last ten years have been around the scores themselves. I want to first discuss the *Kurt Weill Edition*, a series of critical editions commissioned by the Kurt Weill Foundation, and their repercussions for ways of thinking about work and text in relation to Weill.

THE KURT WEILL EDITION

At the time of writing, seven volumes of the collection have been published with plans for a further twenty eight; the stage Editions will make up twenty three of these.¹⁵⁸ Each Edition 'contains an introductory essay by the volume editor(s) covering the work's genesis, performance, transmission, and reception; editorial methodology; and, where relevant, issues of performance practice.'¹⁵⁹ The act of publishing expensive critical editions of scores is in itself provocative; as such publications have historically suggested that it is possible to find a complete and authoritative version of the composer's intentions, and that it is desirable to capture this within an edition. This is something that the Edition's editors recognise:

The scholarly foundation of a complete edition implicitly embodies a judgment of the oeuvre involved. The considerable investment of money and effort represented by an edition project can be justified only for a composer of 'classical' importance and an oeuvre of high rank (both of which are, in turn, enhanced by that very expenditure).¹⁶⁰

There is the possibility that publishing can offer an opportunity to break away from these limited concepts. In the case of film scores, scholar Ben Winters has shown in the example of Erich Korngold that there is an opportunity to resist assumptions about the authority of the composer in publication. (For more details about the way in which Korngold projected his own work in Hollywood as part of an artistic process see pages 113-115.) Winters suggests

¹⁵⁸ Kurt Weill Foundation, 'Kurt Weill Edition – Available and Forthcoming Volumes', <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/available-and-forthcoming-volumes>> [Accessed 19 June 2010].

¹⁵⁹ The Editorial Board of the Edition, 'The Kurt Weill Edition', *Notes*, 56.2 Second Series (December 1999), 315-318 (p. 315).

¹⁶⁰ Giseller Schubert, and Edward Harsh, 'On the Editorial Principles of the Kurt Weill Edition', *Notes*, 56.2 Second Series (December 1999), 340-343 (p. 341).

that the score for *The Adventures of Robin Hood* 'can be shown to encompass numerous authorial contributions from the score's orchestrators, the film's producer and voices from the composer's past.'¹⁶¹ As a result:

It resists submission to the musical work-concept, and to the Romantic ideas of single authorship and of the artwork as conceived in a single 'Gestalt'. While these multiple voices can be arguably best understood in Barthesian terms as constituting the weave of the Text, they are, paradoxically, perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the common 'language' of the musical work-concept itself, namely the published edition.¹⁶²

Winters proposes that the act of publication could potentially reveal how 'the film score refuses to be constrained by those very bonds that a traditional musical edition might try to impose.'¹⁶³

I would suggest that this need to resist the 'musical work-concept' is particularly important in documenting the musical, which is, like the film score, a collaborative text. The specific nature of the musical, as I established in the last chapter, requires that any critical edition should record the collaborative nature of the composer's role in the production process. The Edition's editors have identified this problem, explaining that:

What is necessary is a complementary orientation toward the hermeneutics of the musico-sociological context in which the respective works are conceived, created, and performed-in which they 'live' and attain their 'identity'. Under these considerations, central aesthetic concepts such as 'work', 'version', 'text', 'autonomy', and 'authenticity' can take on altered meanings or significance that can have a decisive effect on editions.¹⁶⁴

Though the editors do not reject these aesthetic concepts, they accept that traditional approaches to critical editions will not work with Weill. They note that his 'oeuvre forces a general rethinking of editorial principles-that it does so is no small sign of his aesthetic significance.'¹⁶⁵ There is recognition that that Weill's working practices within 1930s and 1940s Broadway music theatre

¹⁶¹ Ben Winters, 'Catching Dreams: Editing Film Scores for Publication', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 132.1 (2007), 115-140 (pp. 117-118).

¹⁶² Winters, (p. 118).

¹⁶³ Winters, (p. 118).

¹⁶⁴ Schubert and Harsh, (p. 342).

¹⁶⁵ Schubert and Harsh, (p. 343).

challenge any sense of completeness in the written record of the performance. They also identify that although Weill 'always created and communicated his music in written form' (as opposed to say playing it out for another person to notate) 'the text is not synonymous with the work'.¹⁶⁶ This acknowledgement of the processes of Weill's practice has had particular consequences for the Editions:

Taking into account this unstable relationship between work and text requires a degree of editorial flexibility that runs counter to the basic assumptions underpinning many complete editions-foremost among them the notion of the autonomy of the text, uncorrupted by performance and reception history.¹⁶⁷

Viewing Weill's engagement with musical theatre (both in Germany and in America) and rejecting notions such as the corruption of performance, in this way is a significant step for the field. It begins to meet the challenge that Weill as a 'composer as dramatist' or a *Musikregisseur* presents to traditional concepts of the composer's authority over, and presence within, their own texts.

Understanding the production of musical theatre as being 'inextricably bound up with the process of creative realization for specific events' opens the potential for further study of Weill's collaborations.¹⁶⁸ The choice of 'events' suggests a tacit acknowledgement of the collaborative process which involves more than just the composer, or Weill and the lyricist. This does not change the fact that the Editions inherently privilege Weill's role in this collaboration, he remains the Author (after all, the publication is funded by the *Kurt Weill* Foundation). Note for example: 'Weill nearly always conceived his works for the musical theatre as events - for particular performers, locations, and audiences', (it is Weill doing the conceiving).¹⁶⁹ If the reality of Weill's practice has forced the 'general rethinking of editorial principles' in relation to the written text, there is little interest in formally recognising the role of other collaborators in forming the event. This is perhaps self-evident; the Kurt Weill Edition is necessarily focused on Weill's contribution to the collaborative

¹⁶⁶ Editorial Board, (p. 316).

¹⁶⁷ Editorial Board, (p. 316).

¹⁶⁸ Editorial Board, (p. 316).

¹⁶⁹ Editorial Board, (p. 317).

event, rather than the *collaborative process* within which Weill was one of many contributors. There is then little editorial emphasis on Weill's place within a complex series of exchanges and conflicting agencies.

Within these restraints, the Editions are a significant development in the field. Stephen Hinton describes their purpose as being 'committed to conveying the history of the work as text, while being intended for use in critically informed performances. Its claims to being definitive do not extend to the expectation that henceforth all productions should be the same.'¹⁷⁰ The Editions, perhaps inadvertently, challenge the notion that there could be a complete text which could perfectly represent what Weill intended or might best contain his authorial intent. I would suggest that the form of paper publication itself is restrictive, particularly when instigated by the foundation that manages the composer's estate; and often leads to conditions which necessarily confirm signature practices.

Beyond the kind of methodological recognition of this situation I am presenting in this thesis, digitisation offers significant opportunities to break away from the author led model. For example, *Music Theatre Online* aims to use the internet to demonstrate the intricacy of music theatre production methods. The site, managed by the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH), is a digital archive with texts, scores, images, video and audio. They explain that:

The best printed editions of musical theatre texts cannot fully provide the experience of simultaneous expression of verbal, musical, and terpsichorean languages so necessary to fully understand the art form. Using the multimedia capabilities of the modern web browser, we hope to create a better framework for studying these important works of drama.¹⁷¹

It may be that technology offers the best opportunity to bring about Winters's demand for publication which moves away from the traditional problems of a

¹⁷⁰ Stephen Hinton, 'A New Edition of *Die Dreigroschenoper*: Challenges, Principles, and Solutions', *Notes*, 56.2 Second Series (December 1999), 319-330 (p. 324).

¹⁷¹ Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities, 'Music Theatre Online: About', *Music Theatre Online*, 2009
<<http://mith.umd.edu/mto/about.html>> [accessed 21 June 2010].

printed critical edition. It clearly opens the opportunities for demonstrably correlating dramaturgical decisions to the particular conditions of performance, and in making multiple drafts accessible. There are prohibitive factors to this kind of work; institutional caution in opening access to musicals still under copyright is obvious, as is the attraction and prestige of editions remaining hardback exclusive (and expensive) publications. However, I would argue that the work being carried out at MITH opens tremendous possibilities for musical theatre historical scholarship as a whole and, were it ever to be considered, for Weill studies.

APPROACHES TO INDIVIDUAL WORKS

In addition to the Editions themselves which focus on the American stage works (of which only *Firebrand of Florence* has currently been published) there have been significant steps forward in approaching individual collaborations.¹⁷² I want to briefly address bruce mcclung's *Biography of a Musical* here because it particularly relates to the issues raised in this chapter, and demonstrates the possibilities for further study. mcclung's 2007 monograph (published the same year as Tim Carter's work on *Oklahoma!*) was an attempt to 'reconstruct[...] *Lady in the Dark* through a variety of sources'.¹⁷³ The book contains a retelling of the opening night of the musical, a history of the 'five-year odyssey of how Hart, Gerhswin, and Weill came to conceive [it]', an explanation of the contemporary context, and an examination of its influence and subsequent revivals.¹⁷⁴ There is a tension between the position mcclung occupies as a historian/musicologist and the narrative structure of the biography, so critical analysis is restricted to particular sections of the book. This is perhaps an inescapable condition within a crossover work like mcclung's; publishing around the musical is open to a wider audience in a way that a similar work on a contemporary performance piece is not. Within

¹⁷² Of these see: Jonathan C. Friedman, *The Literary, Cultural, and Historical Significance of the 1937 Biblical Stage Play 'The Eternal Road'* (Lewiston, N.Y: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004).

Elmar Juchem, *Kurt Weill Und Maxwell Anderson: Neue Wege Zu Einem Amerikanischen Musiktheater 1938-1950*, Veröffentlichungen der Kurt-Weill-Gesellschaft Dessau, Bd. 4 (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2000).

¹⁷³ bruce d. mcclung, *Lady in the Dark: Biography of a Musical* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. xvi.

¹⁷⁴ mcclung, *Biography*, p. 34.

these constraints, mcclung's work reveals fascinating glimpses into the practical conditions that the production operated within; for example, Weill's orchestrations for the piece are for an orchestra of twenty musicians, the house minimum for the theatre in which it played.¹⁷⁵

mcclung raises issues of performance practice in relation to the female lead Gertrude Lawrence. On one occasion, he notes, she responded to her co-star's show-stealing performance by changing a solo into a 'bump and grind' dance routine. mcclung argues that 'she produced a conclusion to *Lady in the Dark* removed from the intentions of the male writers and directors'.¹⁷⁶ mcclung begins to reveal Weill operating within an active collaboration with Hart and Gershwin, even if this is constricted within the narrative format. It demonstrates the potential that examining the conditions around the act of performance offer to the historian, and the rich possibility for further critical analysis.

CONCLUSION

In its move away from romanticised versions of the composer and of artistic autonomy, recent Weill scholarship has challenged the notion of Weill the 'might-have-been' proposed by Drew. Though concepts of 'Two Weills' have been dismissed, the emphasis on issues of identity reveals its lingering influence. Nonetheless, work has been undertaken which is beginning to reveal Weill as a theatre practitioner, and this thesis will expand and contribute to the further development of this field. The model Adorno proposes of the *Musikregisseur* facilitates the cultural materialist methodology I have established, and formalises an understanding of Weill as a composer working within a collaborative process.

In order to return to the application of this methodology in analysis, I need to finally lay out the last element of context to Weill's collaborations within Broadway: Weill as an exile. I want to establish Weill's relationship to the imagined America in German culture before 1933, and to examine the context of exile as an experience. This will enable me to address the particular

¹⁷⁵ mcclung, *Biography*, p. 79.

¹⁷⁶ mcclung, *Biography*, p. 99.

assumptions that have troubled Weill's reputation because he was a so-called artistic exile. I will also consider Weill's exiled contemporary Erich Korngold and his relationship to American cultural industries. Finally, I will discuss how the formalised concept of exile as an intellectual position has further exacerbated Weill's troubled position.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will engage with those aspects of Weill's career in Germany which shaped his collaborative practice in America, the subsequent discourse around those works, and his reputation. I will examine the particular importance of *Amerikanismus* within German culture in the 1920s, and the contemporaneous development of radio and film. The associated reform of German opera and art music, though largely a response to World War I, incorporated ideas of America (for example *Neue Sachlichkeit* and what could broadly be called jazz idioms). I will also establish that Weill's role in music reform in this period is relevant to his later career in American musical theatre. Silvija Jestrovic and Yana Meerzon note, in their introduction to a study of performance and exile in relation to America, that exile 'reinforces the inevitable gap between what immigrants imagine of their new land and home and what they truly face after they have landed in those places.'¹ Kim Kowalke has suggested for Weill there will 'always remain within his legacy "the two Americas" [he] experienced – the one he imagined from afar and the one he embraced from within.'² I propose that the America Weill imagined 'from afar' provides the necessary context to understanding his later negotiation of the cultural industries 'from within'.

In this chapter I will explore Weill's position as an exile from Germany to America in light of the broader issues this transition raises. I will consider the literature through one particular aspect: the loss of the exile's home language. Of all the losses an exile may face this is perhaps the most profound since it impacts on all other areas of their lives. The established narrative around the experience of composers and musicians often implies they were protected

¹ Silvija Jestrovic and Yana Meerzon, 'Introduction: Framing 'America' – Between *Exilic Imaginary* and *Exilic Collective*' in *Performance, Exile and 'America'*, ed. by Silvija Jestrovic and Yana Meerzon (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) pp. 1-20 (p. 8).

² Kim H. Kowalke, 'Kurt Weill's American Dreams', *Theater*, 30 (2000), 76-81 (p. 76-77).

from this most painful of losses because they spoke the supposedly universal language of music. This has contributed to romantic conceptions of composers and their negotiation of the host culture in exile. I will also examine Weill's contemporary Erich Korngold and his work as a composer within the film industry, and the consequences that his work in Hollywood had on his reputation.

AMERIKANISMUS

The mythologizing around America as a land of political and religious freedom had been established in German culture long before the *Amerikanismus* trend in the 1920s. Goethe's 1827 poem, *Amerika, Du hast es besser*, wistfully reflects on the New World's lack of 'ruined castles' with their consequential 'useless strife'.³ The popularity in Germany of these images of a blank landscape, ripe with possibility and adventure, is perhaps best demonstrated in the craze of 'Wild West' novels in the early part of the twentieth century. Translations of Fennimore Cooper and Karl May's German language books (the latter of which had in fact never visited America) were immensely popular. In the case of Fritz Lang, the May books were his 'ticket to the Wild West', and 'in a sense his first escape from Vienna'.⁴ Walt Whitman's poetry had been hugely popular in Germany, conjuring an unimaginable space, vast stretches of uninhabited American landscape, and of inconceivable bounty:

Land of coal and iron! land of gold! land of cotton, sugar, rice!
Land of wheat, beef, pork! land of wool and hemp! land of the apple
and the grape!
Land of the pastoral plains, the grass-fields of the world! land of those
sweet-air'd interminable plateaus!⁵

Many German composers set Whitman's words to music, including several who would later seek refuge in the USA; including Eduard Zuckmayer, Franz

³ Quoted and translated in Christian F. Melz, 'Goethe and America', *College English*, 10.8 (1949), 425-431 (p. 426).

⁴ Patrick McGilligan, *Fritz Lang: The Nature of the Beast* (London: Faber, 1997) p. 17.

⁵ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass, Book 2*,
<<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1322/1322-h/1322-h.htm>> [Accessed 6 November 2007].

Schreker and Paul Hindemith. (In exile there both Hindemith and Weill set Whitman's verses.)

As these literary trends suggest, as the option of returning from the USA became more affordable (that is to say, one might be able to visit rather than emigrate there), the importing of American cultural products began on an industrial level. The USA became an established cultural presence, predominantly through the distribution of Hollywood movies. These films disseminated images of American life; while cowboys and Indians occupied the Westerns, gangsters dominated cityscapes. Weill and Brecht were clearly influenced by this imagery, most obviously in the adaptation of the *songspiel*, *Mahagonny*, into the opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. (Note the Americanised neology from song and *singspiel*.) The piece is ostensibly set in an American city, but the portrayal is distorted, an imagined version of a place neither collaborator had visited, complete with the occasional use of a strange version of English.⁶ (The most well known example being, 'Oh, show us the way to the next little dollar | For we must find the next little dollar | For if we don't find the next little dollar | I tell you we must die!'⁷) Lenya, in her recollection of the collaboration, noted that 'into the picture of *Mahagonny* went everything we had read or heard about the America of the 1920's gangster films, newspaper accounts of the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, the Florida boom.'⁸ Weill himself reminisced that during this time:

Berlin [...] was in spirit the most American city in Europe. We liked everything we knew about this country. We read Jack London, Hemingway, Dreiser, Dos Passos, we admired Hollywood pictures, and American Jazz had a great influence on our music. America was a very romantic country for us.⁹

⁶ The words were not necessarily Brecht's own. For more on this see John Willett's foreword to Patty Lee Parmalee, *Brecht's America* (Miami: Miami University & Ohio State University Press, 1981), p. xiii.

⁷ Bertolt Brecht, 'Alabama-Song', in *Bertolt Brecht Gedichte*, ed. by Peter Rühmkorf (Stuttgart: München, 1985), p. 383 (p. 383).

⁸ Quoted in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), p. 57.

⁹ Radio program broadcast, 'I'm an American! Interview with Kurt Weill', NBC Blue Network, 9 March 1941. Transcribed from audiocassette held by the

Patty Lee Parmalee identifies that by the 1930s in Germany, 'everything new in the popular arts and recreation seemed to come from the United States: jazz, Chaplin films, the Charleston, skyscrapers and neon lights, boxing, clothing styles.'¹⁰ Hindemith's diary entry on the day he saw New York for the first time reflects his familiarity with the city, and his awe at the reality of it:

One has seen it a thousand times in films and photographs but it is too fantastic to describe. The skyscrapers of Manhattan are absolutely wild... It looks like a fairyland, for it is so improbable that man could have built anything like this.¹¹

There is however an obvious need for caution in supposing how far German culture was saturated with ideas of America in the 1920s and what these ideas were used for. Thomas Saunders notes that, 'America's cultural presence' within Germany could be seen as primarily 'a set of images and ideas'.¹² These concepts were used for specific purposes within German life.

Brecht's work is a useful example of the employment of these ideas for a particular function. Images of the USA provided the basis for much of Brecht's theatre and poetry in the 1920s, the playwright appeared to be driven by fear that Germany could fall into the same capitalist fate. It has been suggested that Brecht was influenced by Whitman (Parmalee argues that it 'provid[ed him] with an important conception of America'.)¹³ This is clear in his 1924 poem, *Anne Smith erzählt die Eroberung Amerikas*: 'In the beginning | It was grassland from the | Atlantic ocean to the still pacific sea'.¹⁴ The arrival of the 'man with white skin' heralds the destruction of Whitman's world:

WLRC, Ser.122/3 in <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/354-im-an-american>> [accessed 14 October 2009].

¹⁰ Parmalee, p. 9.

¹¹ Hindemith's diary entry for 2 April 1937, quoted in Luther Noss, *Paul Hindemith in the United States*, Music in American Life (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. 16.

¹² Thomas J. Saunders, 'How American Was It? German Popular Culture from Weimar to Hitler', in *German Pop Culture - How "American" Is It?*, ed. Agnes C. Muller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), p. 53.

¹³ Parmalee, p. 38.

¹⁴ Bertolt Brecht, 'Anne Smith Relates the Conquest of America', in *Bertolt Brecht: Bad Time for Poetry - Was it? Is it? 150 Poems and Songs*, ed. by John Willett (London, Methuen, 1995), pp. 44-45 (pp. 44-45).

The rivers divided and the white man
Lifted the yellow metal out of them
And the ground tore apart under his hand
And out of it ran
The golden oil and all around
Wooden huts grew out of rotting grass and
Out of the wooden huts grew mountains of stone they were
Called cities.¹⁵

Conversely Brecht also used the idea of an American urban centre being ominously threatened by the empty countryside (as in the case in *Mahagonny*). John Willett describes this process as an imagined map centred on Chicago and other major cities that could be 'threatened by all kinds of natural catastrophes, ranging from earthquakes and hurricanes to that ever present desert [...] just waiting to take over the shining freeways and lush gardens of the City of Angels.'¹⁶ Some Brecht scholars have seen this as a reflection of a fear about Germany's changing landscape; Parmalee notes that Brecht often referred to Berlin in his journals as 'Chicago'; 'Die große Angst vor dem kalten Chicago!' ('The great fear of cold Chicago!').¹⁷ The more pressing fear for Brecht is of the peril of an industrially led society that is focused on capitalism. Richard Ruland argues 'America is [...] made to bear an impassioned indictment for all Brecht found awry in his native Germany.'¹⁸

This use of the USA as a model from which lessons could be learnt can also be found in technology and industry. The country's success was interpreted as a kind of template that Germany might take particular elements from; its economic methods of production and management processes were used as models for the reconstruction of post war Germany.¹⁹ However, the USA was not the perfect solution, as Mary Nolan writes: 'America was not exceptional,

¹⁵ Brecht, 'Anne Smith', (pp. 44-45).

¹⁶ John Willett, *Foreword*, in Parmalee, p. x.

¹⁷ Parmalee dates these comments to c. October 1921. Parmalee, p. 13.

¹⁸ Richard Ruland, 'The American Plays of Bertolt Brecht', *American Quarterly*, 15.3 (1963), 371-389 (p. 372).

¹⁹ The models of Taylor and Ford were particularly important. For more on this see: Charles S. Maier, 'Between Taylorism and Technocracy: European Ideologies and the Vision of Industrial Productivity in the 1920s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 5.2 (1970), 27-61 and Wolfgang König, 'Adolf Hitler vs. Henry Ford: The Volkswagen, the Role of America as a Model, and the Failure of a Nazi Consumer Society', *German Studies Review*, 27.2 (2004), 249-268.

but rather simply advanced, Germans could find their future written there.’²⁰ It was a kind of social experiment, one from which mistakes could be recognised and learnt from. Lutz Koepnick suggests that: ‘Americanism in the 1920s emerged as a labyrinthine discursive site for German debates about the meaning of modernity, the contemporary reorganization of social practices, and forms of political representation.’²¹

Kowalke notes that for Weill and his contemporaries: ‘This American “Other” was a looking glass reflecting mirages of an *Amerika* that Germany created in an attempt to bring into focus the future of its own shattered cultural identity.’²² I will now examine how America as Other was used specifically by German composers of the period.

INFLUENCE OF *AMERIKANISMUS* ON GERMAN MUSIC

After the trauma of World War I, emerging German composers moved away from what had previously been a dominant trend – absolute music with its inherent implications of nationalism and romanticism. In the nineteenth century, absolute *Tonkunst* had been positioned as a response against Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*.²³ However, this trend had further promoted the kind of mythologized practice I have already addressed; it aspired to the ‘ideal of musical purity’ which music had been seen to fall short of by ‘being subordinated to words (as in song), to drama (as in opera), to some representational meaning (as in programme music), or even to the vague requirements of emotional expression.’²⁴ So while absolute music broadly implies a way to “rescue” music from words and stories, or from anything else

²⁰ Mary Nolan, ‘Imagining America, Modernizing Germany’, in *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*, ed. by Thomas Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994), pp. 71-84 (p. 74).

²¹ Lutz P. Koepnick, ‘Unsettling America: German Westerns and Modernity’, *Modernism/Modernity*, 2.3 (1995), 1-22 (p. 4).

²² Kim Kowalke, ‘Kurt Weill’s American Dreams’, *Theater*, 30 (2000), 76-81 (p. 78).

²³ Roger Scruton, ‘Absolute Music’, Grove Music Online 2008, *Oxford Music Online*, <<http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.oxfordjournals.org/abstract/00069>> [accessed 25 October 2008].

²⁴ Scruton, ‘Absolute Music’.

that might supposedly water down its power, the term came to mean music which has 'no external reference'.²⁵ Roger Scruton notes that this definition would suggest that 'Vivaldi's concertos the 'Four Seasons' are less absolute than the *Art of Fugue*.'²⁶ Absolute music also had connotations of nationality. Celia Applegate suggests that although it 'oriented to transcendent questions of existence far above the lesser matters of national character [...] it valorised musical genres like the symphony that not just the Germans but all Europeans associated with German composers – Beethoven, of course, chief among them.'²⁷

The rise of absolute music was particularly problematic for opera, since it diminished the value of music that was seen as being subservient to narrative. Weill, writing in 1925, notes that:

The general musical development of the young generation followed a course that temporarily led away from opera. An energetic purification process initially eliminated all extra-musical influences, especially the literary points of congruence. [...] People looked on opera somewhat scornfully as an inferior genre, for they thought only of music drama which they wanted to escape.²⁸

Weill is talking about the evaluation of music on its own terms. It is important to remember that German operatic reform in the mid 1920s was part of a much wider rethinking of the place and function of art music. *Amerikanismus* contributed to this reaction, providing other options, as Stephen Hinton suggests: 'American values – or what was taken for American values – provided the younger generation of Germans with an alternative to the discredited nationalist ones of their parents'.²⁹ I want to establish the consequences of this appeal to the New World on German music.

²⁵ Scruton, 'Absolute Music'.

²⁶ Scruton, 'Absolute Music'.

²⁷ Celia Applegate, 'Introduction', in *Music and German National Identity*, ed. by Celia Applegate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 1-35 (p. 13).

²⁸ Kurt Weill, 'New Opera' ["Die neue Oper", *Die Neue Weg* 55 (16 January 1926), pp. 24-25], in Kim Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, Appendix II, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 1979), pp. 464-467 (p. 464).

²⁹ Stephen Hinton, 'Hindemith and Weill - Cases of "Inner" and "Other" Direction', in *Driven into Paradise: the Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, ed. by Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 261-278 (p. 264).

REFORM IN GERMAN MUSIC

As I have noted, this reform process was shaped both by ideas of the USA and the development of new mediums for the dissemination of music. I will consider operatic reform alongside the models of *Neue Sachlichkeit* and *Gebrauchsmusik*, and the use of American dance music (jazz) as source material. I will also address Weill's views on radio and film, the new technology of the era. (Weill's output in this period is shaped by his theoretical positions on epic theatre, and as I will go on to examine this in depth in Chapter 4, for the purposes of clarity I will not do so here.)

NEUE SACHLICHKEIT AND GEBRAUCHSMUSIK

The *Neue Sachlichkeit* (or New Objectivity) movement reflected the turn to what were perceived to be American modernist principles. Frederich Ewen notes: 'its goal was the presentation of the historical present, its mode of expression the document, and its tutelary divinity America.'³⁰ Jost Hermand defines the movement as 'primarily not so much an artistic as an ideological standpoint that seems to reject everything idealistic, noble, and grandiose, including even bourgeois artistic isms themselves.'³¹ Emphasis shifted away from the composer's autonomy towards a goal of 'communication and reference to external subjects and events became a crucial factor'.³²

As a result, composers wrote for a variety of venues and participants, for example, school children or community groups. This music could be seen as functional and useful, hence, *Gebrauchsmusik*, through its performance by amateurs. It answered the need Weill proposed for 'music to be useful to society at large'.³³ Brecht and Hindemith collaborated on what they called the *Lehrstück*: 'less a work designed for concert presentation than one which

³⁰ Frederic Ewen, *Bertolt Brecht: His Life, His Art and His Times* (n.p.: Calder & Boyars, 1970), p. 175.

³¹ Jost Hermand, 'Neue Sachlichkeit: Ideology, Lifestyle or Artistic Movement?', in *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*, ed by. Thomas Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann (Columbia, SC.: Camden House, 1994), pp. 57-68 (p. 58).

³² Hermand, (p. 58).

³³ Stephen Hinton, 'Gebrauchsmusik', *Grove Music Online*, (Oxford Music Online, 2008)

<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/10804>> [accessed 7 October 2007].

served the learning process of those actively involved.’³⁴ *Lehrstücke* were written for schools and colleges, explicitly for the edification of those singing and performing rather than those listening. *Der Jasager*, Brecht and Weill’s most successful *Lehrstück*, was widely celebrated in the German music press.³⁵ There was a parallel attempt to ensure the contemporaneity of the music itself, and a particular desire to link opera with its surroundings. This was manifested in *Zeitopern*, examples of these include *Johnny Spielt Auf!* and *Neues vom Tage*.

OPERA REFORM AND TECHNOLOGY

Weill wrote prodigiously about his commitment to opera as a form and its possibilities before and after exile. He passionately believed that music theatre was a worthwhile enterprise. He responded to the popularity of absolute music with suggestions for how opera might respond:

We must compose music in opera with the same unrestrained development of imagination as in chamber music. But, therefore, it cannot be a matter of transferring the elements of absolute music into opera; that would be the path that leads to the cantata and oratorio. Rather the reverse: the dramatic impetus that opera requires can be a very essential component of any musical product. Mozart taught me that.³⁶

There is a profound emphasis on precision and clarity in musical experience (this is particular clear in Weill’s understanding of *gestic* music, see pages 181-183). Weill proposes that: ‘the crystalline clarity and the inner tension of musical diction can be based only on the transparency of our emotional substance, and then our music can again possess the typical operatic elements.’³⁷ Weill’s responses, and German music reform in general, were shaped by the spread of new technology which had profound repercussions for music.

³⁴ Hinton, ‘Gebrauchsmusik’.

³⁵ See David Drew, ‘Weill’s School Opera’, *The Musical Times*, 106.1474 (December 1965), 934-937.

³⁶ Kurt Weill, ‘Commitment to Opera [“Bekenntnis zur Oper”, 25 Jahre neue Musik (Jahrbuch 1925 der Universal-Edition, Vienna), pp. 226-28]’, in Kim Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, Appendix II, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 1979), pp. 458-460 (p. 458).

³⁷ Weill, ‘Commitment to Opera’, (p. 458).

RADIO AND FILM

Jost Hermand explains that 'the phonograph and radio made it possible for the first time, at least theoretically, to break the bourgeois monopoly that had made concerts and operas too expensive for the masses.'³⁸ The sheer potential of opening music to an audience beyond the concert house raised aesthetic and ideological questions of what kind of music should be played, and for what purpose. This was also true in the case of film; Bryan Gilliam explains that film's broad reach and appeal 'attracted those composers associated with *Neue Sachlichkeit*, composers who sought one form of *Gebrauchsmusik* that would engage a larger cultural community.'³⁹ Gilliam identifies that 'many who embraced cinema, especially those who sought a new post-war aesthetic, recognised film's equal emphasis on art and technology, as well as its potential to reach a larger audience.'⁴⁰

Brecht and Weill used the radio to shape the form of their collaboration with Paul Hindemith, *Der Lindberghflug*. This piece retold Charles Lindbergh's flight across the Atlantic and was intended to be played over the radio with the listener filling in the part of Lindbergh. In the context of other *Zeitopern* which simply featured the radio as a plot device, it used the radio as a medium and was therefore: 'a more serious effort to work with the specific features of the new technology.'⁴¹ Alexander Rehding argues that in using the listener as a collaborator: 'the composition would thus be an open work that required completion through the media and the listener.'⁴² Rehding explains that when the piece was performed that the staging reflected the "'inside" of the radio: orchestra, chorus, singers and announcer' on one half of the stage, and on the other, a singer performing the part of Lindbergh and 'representing

³⁸ Hermand, 'Neue Sachlichkeit', (p. 65).

³⁹ Bryan Gilliam, 'Stage and Screen: Kurt Weill and Operatic Reform in the 1920s', in *Music and Performance During the Weimar Republic*, ed. by Bryan Gilliam, Cambridge Studies in Performance Practice 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1-12 (p. 2).

⁴⁰ Gilliam, 'Operatic Reform', (p. 12).

⁴¹ Alexander Rehding, 'Magic Boxes and *Volksempfänger*', in *Music, Theatre and Politics in Germany: 1848 to the Third Reich*, ed. by Nikolaus Bacht (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), pp. 255-271 (p. 267).

⁴² Rehding, (p. 267).

the individual listener in his home.⁴³ The performance was also broadcast via speakers outside of the auditorium. Rehding notes that although the premiere was presented in a concert setting, it showed 'clear guidelines about how to perform the work properly on future occasions.'⁴⁴ Although Brecht encouraged the listeners to leave the concert hall and go outside, 'no one in the audience followed his suggestion and rather preferred to listen to the work in the traditional concert hall manner.'⁴⁵

As a medium, the radio also challenged ways of thinking about the audience for music and music theatre as Claire Taylor-Jay notes: 'whether the reaction to it was one of enthusiastic embrace or categorical rejection, technology had a considerable impact on composers' standing towards society during the 1920s, and helped to redefine their relationship to their audiences.'⁴⁶ Weill's particular response was to argue for the opening of art music to a wider public. Taylor-Jay notes that for Weill, radio had 'an important place in the reorganization of musical life, taking music out of the exclusive world of the well-off, and bringing it to the majority of people who have been "'musically dispossessed"'.⁴⁷

JAZZ & DANCE MUSIC

German art music in this period is seen to have been heavily influenced by American dance idioms. This is particularly reflected in the work of Weill and Ernst Krenek. Though this influence is often assumed to have been jazz, in the 1920s virtually nothing worthy of this title had been heard in Germany. The German economy was far too weak for American musicians to justify the costs of touring there. Even by the mid-1920s, J. Bradford Robinson notes that 'the rare and isolated appearances of legitimate jazz in Weimar culture were overwhelmed by the great mass of commercial syncopated dance music,

⁴³ Rehding, (p. 268).

⁴⁴ Rehding, (p. 268).

⁴⁵ Rehding, (p. 268-9).

⁴⁶ Claire Taylor-Jay, *The Artist-Operas of Pfitzner, Krenek and Hindemith: Politics and the Ideology of the Artist* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), p. 15.

⁴⁷ Kurt Weill, 'Der Rundfunk und die Umschichtung des Musiklebens', (*Der deutsche Rundfunk*, 13 June 1926), *Musik und Theater*, 221-3 (p. 223) quoted in Taylor-Jay, p. 15.

especially Germany's home grown product.'⁴⁸ In fact as Robinson points out: 'jazz to Weimar Germany was an all-embracing cultural label attached to any music from the American side of the Atlantic, or indeed to anything new or exciting, whether this be the "jazz time" of American automobiles or "Maori jazz" from New Zealand.'⁴⁹

In 1929, Weill wrote an article entitled *Notiz zum Jazz*, in which he explains the importance of the style on German music. He notes jazz's inescapable influence on all art music, (though American dance music is still a closer translation), suggesting that jazz had been more important to classical music than formal dance music, even more so than the waltz.⁵⁰ He reserves his strongest praise for jazz's potential impact on the German music industry. Weill recognises the enthusiasm, devotion and 'Arbeitslust' of jazz musicians, which he says was matched by their competence in several instruments, an ability to play from memory, and to improvise while still playing as an ensemble.⁵¹ He remarks that 'the jazz musician is no civil servant', suggesting that their way of working could be used to reform the German music industry.⁵² Weill identifies that the working practices of jazz musicians demonstrates the possibility for an 'artistic and economic restructuring of the process of music making'.⁵³

As Germany moved towards the political far right the connection between jazz music and the USA became increasingly unacceptable; what had once been innovative was now a politically dangerous association. Susan Cook notes that Hindemith's music had been criticised for the inclusion of dance music as early as 1922: 'writers generally decried jazz for its preoccupation with rhythm, for its roots in a so-called primitive culture, and for qualities

⁴⁸ J. Bradford Robinson, 'Jazz reception in Weimar Germany: in search of a shimmy figure', in *Music and Performance During the Weimar Republic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 107-134 (p. 113).

⁴⁹ Bradford Robinson, 'Jazz reception', (p. 113).

⁵⁰ Kurt Weill, 'Notiz zum Jazz', *Anbruch*, 11.3 (March 1929), p. 138 quoted in Kurt Weill, *Ausgewählte Schriften: [von] Kurt Weill* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), p. 197 (p. 197).

⁵¹ 'Desire to work'. Weill, 'Notiz zum Jazz', (p. 197).

⁵² 'Der Jazzmusiker ist kein Beamter'. Weill, 'Notiz zum Jazz', (p. 197).

⁵³ 'eine Künstlerische und wirtschaftliche Neuorganisierung des Interpretentums.' Weill, 'Notiz zum Jazz', (p. 197).

they described as strident, aggressive, commercialized, erotic, and un-German in nature.⁵⁴ Even if the music in question was only an approximation of an American form, such an aspiration marked it out as un-German. In March 1933, *Funkstunde Berlin*, a Berlin radio station, announced that jazz would now be banned from the airwaves. Its connection with the USA was clearly established:

This musical degeneration was first introduced by America, where the folk music of the North American Negroes had given the stimulus to the creation of jazz [...] Berlin Radio has banned all questionable 'Negro Music', so called by a healthy public, where provocative rhythms dominate and the melody might be defiled.⁵⁵

It is then unsurprising that many of the composers who engaged with jazz or similar American concepts were condemned as *Entartete* by the Nazis.⁵⁶ As the party grew in power, many artists who had once looked to the USA would soon be forced to seek refuge there. For Weill, the image of America had provided not only source material and locations for his operas, but examples and models for broadening the reach of art music to a wide audience.

EXILE

Soon after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in January 1933, Weill's publisher, Hans Heinsheimer, wrote to the composer encouraging him to take the situation seriously:

⁵⁴ Susan Cook, 'Jazz as Deliverance: The Reception and Institution of American Jazz During the Weimar Republic', *American Music*, 7.1 (1989), 30-47 (p. 40).

⁵⁵ An announcement from *Funkstunde Berlin*, 8 March 1933 quoted Kurt Weill: *A Life in Pictures and Documents*, ed. by David Farneth, Elmar Juchem and Dave Stein (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), p. 132.

⁵⁶ *Grove* traces the history of a term that originally emerged from social Darwinism, noting that it was 'adopted by the Nazis during the 1920s, it became a loosely defined technical concept with which to condemn modern culture that, according to Hitler, manifested symptoms of national decline. Thus atonal music, jazz and above all works by Jewish composers were branded as 'degenerate', though in fact during the Third Reich reactionary critics applied the term indiscriminately to a wide variety of styles from the avant garde to popular operetta, particularly if the composer was deemed politically or racially unacceptable to the regime.' Erik Levi, 'Entartete Musik', *Grove Music Online*, (*Oxford Music Online*, 2008), <<http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/45065>> [accessed 25 October 2008].

I am not able to share your opinion that the new course in Germany might be only a nightmare lasting a few months. I am filled with the deepest pessimism because I believe that only now will we pay the price for underestimating the opponent.⁵⁷

Weill's last collaboration in Germany, *Der Silbersee: ein Wintermärchen*, written with playwright Georg Kaiser, received simultaneous premiers at Leipzig, Erfurt and Magdeburg on 18 February 1933. The production was a critical success, Stephen Hinton notes, the 'triple premier met with considerable acclaim'.⁵⁸ In spite – and perhaps because of this – the piece (and by extension Weill himself) were politically attacked, leading Heinsheimer to again remind Weill that:

Once again, dear friend, I urge you to think carefully about our conversation and to consider the options such as films, emigrating to Paris, a trip to America, or simply adjusting yourself to an indefinite vacuum with German theatres, schools, and the radio, and to make your decisions in a new pitiless situation.⁵⁹

This letter was written on the day of the Reichstag fires. Weill remained in Germany for a further month, before fleeing to France. The fires heralded the first exodus from Nazi Germany; Jean Palmier suggests that this group were 'chiefly militants from the left organizations and intellectuals [...] but in a fairly limited number'.⁶⁰ There was still a hope that the situation might not continue. Palmier notes that of those who had left 'almost all thought they would be able to return to Berlin in a few weeks, once the Nazi regime collapsed'.⁶¹ On his departure, Brecht is reported to have told fellow refugee Arnold Zweig, 'Don't go too far away. In five years we shall be back.'⁶²

⁵⁷ Kim Kowalke, 'Dancing with the Devil: Publishing Modern Music in the Third Reich', *Modernism/Modernity*, 8.1 (2001), 1-41 (p. 1).

⁵⁸ Stephen Hinton, 'Silbersee, Der', Grove Music Online, (*Oxford Music Online*, 2008), <<http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/O904723>> [accessed 26 October 2008].

⁵⁹ Hans Heinsheimer, 'Hans Heinsheimer of Universal Edition (in Vienna) to Weill, 24 February 1933', quoted in *Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents*, ed. by David Farneth, Elmar Juchem and Dave Stein (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), p. 131 (p. 131).

⁶⁰ Jean Palmier, *Weimar in Exile: The Antifascist Emigration in Europe and America* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 185.

⁶¹ Palmier, p. 227.

⁶² Ewen, *Bertolt Brecht*, p. 292.

Inevitably as further laws were passed institutionalising both fascism and anti-Semitism, additional waves of migration out of Germany followed.

Weill sought refuge in Paris, and began to find collaborations and commissions there, including a ballet which eventually became *The Seven Deadly Sins*, his final major collaboration with Brecht. In 1934, Weill spoke to a Danish newspaper and discussed rather poignantly his feelings about Paris and Germany:

Naturally Paris must become my new home. I know that here new battles await me, battles that at home are already old hat but still have to be waged here, and I feel I'll be able to do some good. It's hard, but at the same time, nice to begin anew with such a change of direction. In my heart of hearts I have never left Germany.⁶³

The year before Weill gave this interview his music had been burnt in Germany in public demonstrations by members of the Hitler Youth.⁶⁴ He had lost his contract with his German publishers who were no longer permitted to promote Jewish composers.⁶⁵ Weill had not escaped from anti-Semitic feeling in France; in a letter to Lenya in July 1933, he writes that he has realised that 'Paris too has quite an active anti-Weill contingent and that they are agitating against me furiously.'⁶⁶ In December 1933, at a concert his music was heckled by a 'pro-Hitler, anti-Semitic demonstration'.⁶⁷ During 1934, the same year he announced he would make Paris his home, he spent increasing amounts of time in London for the British production of *Der Kuhhandel* (*A Kingdom for a Cow*).

As it became clear that there could be no return to Germany, exiles began to look away from Europe to the USA and Russia. In this early exile period,

⁶³ Ole Winding, 'Interview with Kurt Weill', *Aften-Avisen*, Denmark, 21 June 1934, n.p, in *Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents*, ed. by David Farneth, Elmar Juchem and Dave Stein (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), p. 153 (p. 153).

⁶⁴ *Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents*, ed. by David Farneth, Elmar Juchem and Dave Stein (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), p. 137.

⁶⁵ Farneth, Juchem and Stein, p. 90.

⁶⁶ Kurt Weill, '44. Weill in Positano to Lenya in London, [16 July 1933]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 88-89 (p. 88).

⁶⁷ Farneth, Juchem and Stein, p. 90.

Brecht focused on antifascist activities in an attempt to speed the collapse of the Nazis, and to convince the German people to overturn Hitler themselves, 'Europe, especially Germany, was still the centre of Brecht's universe, and he wanted to be near his German-language stage and the struggle against the Nazis.'⁶⁸ Brecht's poetry from the period reflects his desire to go home. His 1937 poem, 'Gedanken über die Dauer des Exils' is particularly moving: 'Don't knock any nails into the wall | Throw your coat on the chair. | What use is planning for next week? | Tomorrow you go back home.'⁶⁹

In London, Weill's operetta received terrible reviews, something which Stephen Hinton suggests was connected to a disastrously received radio broadcast of *The Threepenny Opera* on the BBC.⁷⁰ Hinton also notes Weill's disappointment at the coverage, pointing to this letter from Weill to Lenya and the reference to Heine's poem, 'Wenn ich an Deutschland denke in der Nacht':

I'm slowly getting to the point where I can look forward to working again. But,

*If I think of London in the night,
I find no sleep to ease my plight*

This London flop was a heavy blow for me. But 'just don't get soft, baby!'⁷¹

As the threat of the Nazis spread across Europe, Weill's attention turned to Broadway. He reported a conversation he had with a friend who had already seen New York, 'she says that [it is] a theatre city like Berlin in '28. I'm really looking forward to this America trip.'⁷² Weill was in Italy preparing the score

⁶⁸ James Lyon, *Bertolt Brecht in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 30.

⁶⁹ Bertolt Brecht, 'Thoughts on the Duration of Exile', in *Bertolt Brecht: Bad Time for Poetry – Was it? Is it? 150 Poems and Songs*, ed. by John Willett (London, Methuen, 1995), pp. 87-89 (p. 87).

⁷⁰ Hinton, 'Hindemith and Weill', (p. 267).

⁷¹ Kurt Weill, '137. Weill in Braxen, Switzerland, to Lenya in London [17 July 1935]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 182-183 (p. 183). Quoted in Hinton, 'Hindemith and Weill', (p. 267).

⁷² Kurt Weill, '135. Weill in Morat, Switzerland, to Lenya in London [14 July 1935]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte*

for what would eventually become *The Eternal Road* and in another letter to Lenya sent from Venice, he wrote in more detail:

I've had a lot of time to think about myself. I would be so happy to be able to do something big again, something right – without having to think about those dull-witted audiences of Europe's big cities. Maybe it'll be possible to build up something in America so that I can write my kind of operas again.⁷³

Weill left for the USA on 4 September 1935, for the casting of *The Eternal Road*. He entered as a visitor rather than on an immigration visa and apparently had no plans to remain in the country after the production had opened.

ARRIVAL IN AMERICA

The established narrative of exile from Germany to the USA in the 1930s is one of loss and separation. This is often assumed to be emphasised in the experience of exiled creative practitioners, who are seen to suffer beyond what other exiles might have to endure. The experience of exile is supposedly worse for them than for a tradesman, or a nurse or teacher because of their creativity. Their unique status as artists is seen to heighten their experience of day to day life; the loss of stability and language and the sheer personal and cultural upheaval of exile are seen to affect them in a more extreme way to non-artists, to ordinary people. These ideas are a consequence of romanticised notions of the artist. The universal losses of exiles are numerous, to mention only a few; language, family, home, reputational and social capital, economic assets, career progression, and for many in the medical profession, licenses to practice. Palmier explains that:

The exile situation is an intimate tragedy that affects all aspects of existence: relationship to time – past, present and future, childhood memories – as well as space, language, ties to others and to oneself.⁷⁴

Lenya, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), p. 182 (p. 182).

⁷³ Kurt Weill, '139. Weill in Venice to Lenya in London [23 July 1935]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. by Lys Symonette and Kim Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), p. 184 (p. 184).

⁷⁴ Palmier, p. 228.

Though the emphasis on the 'intimate tragedy' of exile may accurately represent the experience of many people; it has particular consequences for Weill studies that need to be addressed.

Firstly, since Weill's experience has been positioned as a counter narrative to other exiles, there is a risk that his own circumstance as an exile is overlooked. Weill faced the same losses and challenges as any other exile, plumber or philosopher. Therefore, in approaching his activities in the USA, I want to consider the broader context of exile. In order to do this I will focus on the loss of language, something which permeated every aspect of life in the host country. Doing this will enable the assumptions made about musicians and composers to be questioned, and I will dispute the idea that they were somehow protected from this particular loss because they spoke the 'universal' language of music. This context is significant in understanding Weill's negotiation of entry into American cultural industries.

Secondly, I will examine the formalisation of the 'intimate tragedy' of exile as a critical position of separation. Adorno shaped his own personal experience of exile into a desirable apartness from both host and home cultures. The development of this theory, both by and after Adorno, has established yet another sense of appropriate behaviour that Weill's actions can be seen to betray. I want to consider how Weill's activities can be seen as contradictory to theories of separation and cultural isolation.

In the rest of this chapter, I will establish the context of the exile experience of German immigration into the USA in the 1930s, and consider the critical position that has formed around that experience.

LANGUAGE IN EXILE

Many accounts of exile record that language was the primary obstacle to daily life. One refugee, Hertha Nathorff describes its repercussions: 'we stand in a long line, waiting until we finally can talk to someone and make our plight clear. Clear? But how? I myself, who studied in a high school where ancient

languages were taught, never learned English.⁷⁵ The day to day disruptions are obvious, but they were exacerbated by the changing personal relationship to the loss of one's own home language. German had been appropriated into the language of those who had driven them out of their homes, as Monika Schmid suggests:

On the one hand, it was the language of the family [...] the language of the country to which they belonged, of which they were – or had been – citizens, and toward which many or most had strong feelings of loyalty and patriotism. On the other hand, it also became the language of the persecutor.⁷⁶

As a result some exiles chose not to speak German, or at the least made announcements to that effect. Kurt Tucholsky wrote to Arnold Zweig in 1935: 'I no longer have anything to do with the country, and speak its language as little as possible.'⁷⁷ Even thirty years later, Fritz Lang noted in an interview that immediately after his escape 'I never spoke German again'.⁷⁸ Weill made frequent declarations in the same vein, despite continuing to write letters in German for the rest of his life. Weill clearly felt passionately about his home language:

On the boat we made a resolve to speak nothing but English thereafter. So many foreign-born use their native language in their homes and among their friends. I used to ask my German friends: how can you ever become Americans if you still cling to the language and the customs of a country that has become the most Un-American country in the world?⁷⁹

When the USA went to war with the Axis in 1941, the German language became that of America's official enemy. The response from the German

⁷⁵ Hertha Nathorff, 'Liberty... and Work in New York', in *Hitler's Exiles: Personal Stories of the Flight from Nazi Germany to America*, ed. Mark M. Anderson (New York: New Press, 1998), 215-222 (p. 216-17).

⁷⁶ Monika Schmid, 'I Always Thought I Was a German – It Was Hitler Who Taught Me I was a Jew': National-Socialist Persecution, Identity, and the German Language' in *German-Jewish Identities in America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), pp. 133-153 (p. 134).

⁷⁷ Kurt Tucholsky, letter to Arnold Zweig on 15 December 1935 quoted in Palmier, p. 250.

⁷⁸ Charles Higham and Joel Greenburg, 'Interview with Fritz Lang - 1969', in *Fritz Lang: Interviews*, ed. by Barry Keith Grant (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), pp. 101-26 (p. 102).

⁷⁹ 'I'm an American!'

language newspapers in New York was to restyle themselves as 'papers for "Americans of German language."' ⁸⁰ These same papers requested that their readers not speak German in public. Helmut Pfanner explains: 'their appeals certainly stemmed from a desire to present a united front against Hitler, but they also reflected a feeling of shame that the German and Austrian exiles shared the Nazis' language.' ⁸¹ The exiles were re-designated 'enemy aliens', a status particularly galling to those who had already lost their German citizenship. Thomas Mann signed a group letter to President Roosevelt in protest about this term, the letter argued that: 'it cannot be deemed just to comprise them under the discrediting denomination of "Aliens of Enemy Nationality."' ⁸² Hannah Arendt described the procedure that she had, by then, become accustomed to:

In Europe the Nazis confiscated our property; but in Brazil we have to pay thirty percent of our wealth [...] In Paris we could not leave our homes after eight o'clock because we were Jews; but in Los Angeles we are restricted because we are 'enemy aliens'. Our identity is changed so frequently that nobody can find out who we actually are. ⁸³

In addition to this state of political and personal confusion, English often adversely affected an exile's familiarity with German; Palmier notes that some exiles did not realize 'that their mother tongue was no longer intact'. ⁸⁴ Others were aware of the phenomenon, actively dreading it:

Hilde Spiel [...] told of the recurring nightmare which she experienced during the war years in England, 'in dem ich meinte, nach Wien versetzt zu sein – eine Feindin in meinem Vaterland, mit englischem

⁸⁰ Hannah Arendt, 'We Refugees', in *Hitler's Exiles: Personal Stories of the Flight from Nazi Germany to America*, ed. by Mark M. Anderson (New York: New Press, 1998), pp. 253-262 (p. 253).

⁸¹ Helmut F. Pfanner, *Exile in New York: German and Austrian Writers after 1933* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), p. 100.

⁸² Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, Arturo Toscanini, Bruno Walter, G.A. Borgese and Frank Walter, 'Open Letter to President Roosevelt c. February 13 1942', in *Hitler's Exiles: Personal Stories of the Flight from Nazi Germany to America*, ed. by Mark M. Anderson (New York: New Press, 1998), pp. 251-252 (p. 251).

⁸³ Arendt, 'We Refugees', p. 258.

⁸⁴ Palmier, p. 255.

Geld in der Tasche, mit englischen Worten auf der Zunge, indes meine Muttersprache mir in der Kehle gefror.’⁸⁵

This shift between languages is a kind of linguistic no man’s land, in which exiles are no longer able to speak German fluently nor fully embrace English. Jimmy Berg’s comedy song for the New York German language cabaret group, *Die Arche*, needs no translation: ‘I am in a hell of a fix, weil i deutsch und englisch vermix.’⁸⁶

German was also the language of the family for those who had managed to escape with partners and children. Many women found immediate work as maids or nurses, thereby hearing and learning English straightaway while their husbands stayed at home. Children were able to adapt easier, quickly making steps in this new language. For the men, this meant becoming linguistic exiles in their own homes, as in the case of Alfred Döblin who had brought his family to the USA through MGM. When his contract was not renewed, he became increasingly distanced, as Stuart Ferguson explains: ‘Döblin’s limited assimilation kept him isolated while that isolation obstructed his language assimilation.’⁸⁷ The isolation from the outside world was compounded by the loss of a domestic family language. Döblin’s sons gained fluency in their host languages (French and English.)⁸⁸ He envied their abilities, noting that his younger son ‘had no problems assimilating into

⁸⁵ (*‘In which I imagined being removed to Vienna – an enemy in my native country, with English money in my pocket, with English words on my tongue, while my native language froze in my throat’*). Hilde Spiel, *Rückkehr nach Wien: Tagebuch*, (München: Nymphenburger Verl.-Handl, 1946) p. 23 quoted in Konstanze Fliedl, ‘Hilde Spiel’s Linguistic Rights of Residence’, in *Austrian Exodus: The Creative Achievements of Refugees from National Socialism*, ed. by Edward Timms and Ritchie Robertson, vol. Austrian Studies, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 78.

⁸⁶ Pfanner, p. 103.

⁸⁷ Stuart Ferguson, *Language Assimilation and Crosslinguistic Influence: A Study of German Exile Writers*, Tübinger Beiträge Zur Linguistik (Tübinger: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1997), pp. 62-63.

⁸⁸ Harold von Hofe, ‘German Literature in Exile’, *The German Quarterly*, 17.1 (1944), 28-31 (p. 31).

American society, which he came to prefer to France.⁸⁹ Döblin noted poignantly: 'Der Junge wächst und wir – wachsen nicht...'⁹⁰

Language was the most obvious barrier to any exile hoping to continue in their profession. Few writers chose to work in English. Brecht had no desire to learn to speak the language fluently; he entered the USA in 1941 via Russia only when it was the last option. He crossed the Pacific and so arrived in Los Angeles. He quickly made himself at home within the life of the German-speaking exile community that had already settled there. There was no pressing need to be fluent in spoken or written English and, apart from the need to make a living, he could continue in German circles almost indefinitely. When he did try to step outside them he found his fame had not travelled with him: 'to Brecht's dismay, when he attended his first Hollywood cocktail party, he was asked to spell his name.'⁹¹ John Willett suggests that in spite of his attempts at distancing himself by 1944, Brecht 'actually found his knowledge of German becoming affected', forgetting words and remembering only dialect expressions rather than High-German.⁹² Brecht lost the intimate familiarity with their mother tongue he had once relied on.

Fritz Lang arrived in Hollywood relatively early, in 1934. He faced a very different style of filmmaking from that to which he had been accustomed in Germany: 'the director had to embrace a new religion of teamwork, diplomacy and compromise that was antithetical to his personality.'⁹³ He had to return to the humiliating position of pitching ideas; it was over a year before he started filming again. It would seem that much of this enforced free time was spent grappling with English: '[Lang] made a strenuous effort to master [it], especially to pick the colloquialisms that fascinated many émigrés

⁸⁹ Ferguson, p. 63.

⁹⁰ 'The boy grows, and we – do not'. Quoted in Ferguson, p. 63.

⁹¹ John Fuegi, *The Life and Lies of Bertolt Brecht* (London: Harper Collins, 1994), p. 413.

⁹² John Willett, *Brecht in Context: Comparative Approaches*, rev. ed. (London: Methuen, 1998), p. 29.

⁹³ McGilligan, p. 211.

forced to speak and write in a new language.’⁹⁴ Lang explained the particular pain it brought:

You can’t imagine what emigration means for someone who, like me, lives in the midst of the language. You are lost, you start again with the babbling of newborns, you don’t feel enthusiasm, you don’t have an inkling, you don’t have a style. Before getting to the point of being able to think and dream in English, you don’t amount to anything.⁹⁵

The loss of a home language necessarily impacts on all aspects of an exile’s life, whether that is at home with family, or professionally. Weill too faced such profound losses.

MUSICIANS IN EXILE

The plight of musicians in exile is often assumed to be in some way easier. As I have noted, the romanticised idea of music has led to the implication that music is a sort of collective language, and that exiled composers and musicians were free to work entirely unhindered by their situation. Lydia Goehr makes a similar suggestion that:

Musicians and to a certain extent composers had better chances of successful professional integration into their chosen land of exile than did most other refugees from Nazi Germany. Given their special competence, musicians could adapt more easily than writers, who were confronted with the dilemma of either working in the unfamiliar language of their new home or, after having chosen to continue working in their native language, of becoming even more isolated in the new society.⁹⁶

Though the written notation of music itself could be understood in the terms that Goehr suggests, isolating this element of the profession of music from any actual conditions that it operates within is naive. Although a cellist from Germany or the USA can read and play the same music, her suggestion fails to recognise the reality of the business operations through which the musician could be employed in the first place. Treating music as abstract and outside the restrictions of language, economics, and the reality of art worlds ignores

⁹⁴ McGilligan, p. 214.

⁹⁵ Quoted in McGilligan, p. 214.

⁹⁶ Hermann Danuser, ‘Composers in Exile – The Question of Musical Identity’, in *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, ed. by Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 155-157 (p. 157).

its method of production. The trope of music as a universal language suggests that musicians and composers operated outside the constraints of the normal exile process. Frederic Ewen suggests: 'exile is a bitter thing for anyone. But for the writer, it is a particularly galling experience. Unlike the musician or painter or dancer he is bound by the limitations of language.'⁹⁷ Such a presumption masks not only the practitioner's labour, but also any sense of conditions of reception. The audience's role in *hearing* the music is ignored; German and American expectations of what music should sound like are presumed to be more or less the same. This notion is easily undermined, for example, in the case of music theatre (or any kind of text and music) where a new sense of English prosody, as opposed to German, needed to be learnt in order to practice.

It is important to observe the community pressures and expectations Weill faced. The grouping of émigré composers in Los Angeles is often described as a segregated community, rife with internal politics; Albrecht Betz notes in his record of Hanns Eisler's exile in the USA that:

Cliques, personal resentments, reciprocal demarcations that had often been brought with them from Europe were again cultivated. Moreover the majority felt out of place. In the face of the film industry whose overwhelming interest in profitability they regarded with scorn and thought of as cynical, many émigrés nevertheless entertained hopes of material success. The virtually continual frustration and the feeling of rivalry with one another created a tense atmosphere.⁹⁸

Palmier confirms this, noting that the first exiles to compose for films were viewed as 'renegades by their fellow musicians, who saw this collaboration with Hollywood as a betrayal.'⁹⁹ The distaste for what Betz calls Hollywood's 'overwhelming interest in profitability' can be found in contemporary exile studies. The dismissal of exiles who were seen to have 'collaborated' with American cultural industries has continued to the present day. Palmier suggests that:

⁹⁷ Ewen, *Bertolt Brecht*, p. 295.

⁹⁸ Albrecht Betz, *Hans Eisler: Political Musician*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 183.

⁹⁹ Palmier, p. 225.

The majority of them often had to accept hack work – teaching, composition of film music – obsessed by the fear of poverty as well as that of demeaning themselves in the eyes of their followers. If a few such as Kurt Weill managed to adapt to this new reality, others experienced it in anguish (Schoenberg) or despised it (Eisler).¹⁰⁰

The implication that composing film music is in any sense ‘hack work’, can be seen in the reaction to Weill’s contemporary, exiled Viennese opera composer, Erich Korngold, and his career in Hollywood. Korngold’s troubled reception parallels Weill’s own, though the former has received considerably less critical attention. Bryan Gilliam suggests that the reason for this is in part that Korngold, who had written romantic operas at the same time as Weill and Krenek were engaged in *Zeitoper*: ‘retained a tonal vocabulary when atonality was the progressive force’.¹⁰¹ However, Gilliam notes it was Korngold’s ‘migration into mass culture’ which was more problematic.¹⁰²

Korngold while working in Hollywood, was clearly aware of the disputed status of the film industry. He projected a romanticised picture of his own working practices. He explained how he was different from other film composers:

I am fully aware of the fact that I seem to be working under much more favourable conditions than my Hollywood colleagues. [...] So far I have successfully resisted the temptations of an all-year contract because, in my opinion, that would force me into factory-like mass production.¹⁰³

Korngold clearly wanted to differentiate himself: ‘I am told that my method of composing is entirely different from that employed by other Hollywood composers. I am not composing at a desk writing music mechanically.’¹⁰⁴ Ben Winters, whose work demystifies Korngold’s projections, explains that the composer’s comments:

¹⁰⁰ Palmier, p. 530.

¹⁰¹ Bryan Gilliam, ‘Korngold’s Double Exile’, in *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, ed. by Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1999), pp. 223-242 (p. 223).

¹⁰² Gilliam, ‘Korngold’s Double Exile’, (p. 223).

¹⁰³ Erich Korngold, ‘Some Experiences of Film Music’, *Music and Dance in California*, June 1940, n.p., in Brendan G. Carroll, *The Last Prodigy: A Biography Of Erich Wolfgang Korngold* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1997), p. 298.

¹⁰⁴ Korngold, ‘Film Music’, p. 298.

Implicitly painted in opposition to the kind of 'hacks' employed at other studios who, it might be assumed, didn't even watch the film, or at least watched it only once and composed away from the project room in collaboration with their colleagues.¹⁰⁵

Korngold reassured the reader: 'I have often been asked whether, in composing film music, I have to consider the public's taste and present understanding of music. I can answer that question calmly in the negative.'¹⁰⁶ Korngold presents a version of his working practices which makes no concessions to its audience, and is led purely by creativity and inspiration. His campaign was fairly successful as the literature on the composer, though largely biographical in nature, still relies on his own presentation of his habits. He is still presented as artistically *better* than his contemporaries, on the basis that his method of working was creatively led rather than workman like. In her bibliography of Korngold, Jessica Duchen argues:

The same instinct for timing enabled him to work on his film scores in a most unconventional way. Most composers in Hollywood used a 'cue sheet' on which a technician would have written the exact timing for a scene to which music would be fitted; Korngold never did. [...] Korngold refused mechanical aids of all types, finding them more confusing than helpful.¹⁰⁷

This kind of language is also used by Brendan Carroll, who has attempted to rectify Korngold's troubled reputation. Carroll notes that 'if I have to single out his paramount gift, it is the truly elemental force in his major scores to move, to excite, and to overwhelm with the sheer power of his spontaneous inspiration.'¹⁰⁸

Winters directly challenges these assumptions in his work by revealing the reality of Korngold's practices. He examines the particular claim that Korngold's 'renowned sense of timing' obfuscated the need for 'mechanical aid or the use of cue sheets'.¹⁰⁹ He notes that although 'Korngold's musical gifts are surely beyond question, this rather romanticized version of film score

¹⁰⁵ Ben Winters, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold's The Adventures Of Robin Hood: A Film Score Guide* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2007), p. 23.

¹⁰⁶ Korngold, 'Film Music', p. 299.

¹⁰⁷ Jessica Duchen, *Erich Wolfgang Korngold, 20th Century Composers* (London: Phaidon Press, 1996), p. 152.

¹⁰⁸ Carroll, *The Last Prodigy*, p. 371.

¹⁰⁹ Winters, *A Film Score Guide*, p. 23.

composition seems at odds with the evidence presented by the manuscript sources themselves.¹¹⁰ The documentation he has found reveals that 'in the case of *The Adventures of Robin Hood* – evidently a film that did not inspire the composer – Korngold certainly made use of cue sheets.'¹¹¹ Winters presents Korngold as working within a collaborative art world. This work provides a useful reference for my own study of Weill's collaborations. Winters illustrates the need to re-examine the romanticised assumptions (in this case Korngold's presentation of his own work) in relation to the archival evidence. Finally, Winters suggests the possibility of revealing the contribution of other practitioners, for example, the work of Korngold's orchestrators and documenting these accordingly.¹¹²

Korngold's desire to misrepresent his working practices characterizes the prevailing narrative of exile, which can be seen as a desired separation between the exile and American culture as a way to maintain cultural integrity. Palmier's own account, actually reflects this bias:

Not only were the émigrés unfamiliar with the tastes of the American public, most of them were unable to grasp the laws that governed the operation of such an empire. Whilst a number of exiled artists came to terms with the system by adapting their style, and several discovered themselves anew in this way, it condemned a large number to inactivity and hatred towards a world that mocked their sensitivity, their individuality and their pride as creators, not to mention their most cherished values, bearing on the meaning, function and very nature of art.¹¹³

He goes on to suggest that this dislocation 'explains the ambiguous attitude of so many émigrés towards Fritz Lang and Kurt Weill, who seemed to come to terms with the system.'¹¹⁴ Weill's behaviour as an exile betrays these narratives of isolation from the host culture.

The first hand experience of cultural dislocation, as in the case of Theodor Adorno and Edward Said, has shaped theoretical approaches to thinking about exile. Said's description is particularly apt: 'Exile is strangely

¹¹⁰ Winters, *A Film Score Guide*, p. 23.

¹¹¹ Winters, *A Film Score Guide*, p. 23.

¹¹² Winters, *A Film Score Guide*, p. 25.

¹¹³ Palmier, p. 503.

¹¹⁴ Palmier, p. 503.

compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.¹¹⁵ Theodor Adorno's experience is most famously expressed within *Minima Moralia*, and like Said's, is one of terrible loss:

Every intellectual in emigration is, without exception, mutilated, and does well to acknowledge it to himself, if he wishes to avoid being cruelly apprised of it behind the tightly-closed doors of his self-esteem. He lives in an environment that must remain incomprehensible to him, however flawless his knowledge of trade-union organizations or the automobile industry may be; he is always astray. Between the reproduction of his own existence under the monopoly of mass culture, and impartial, responsible work, yawns an irreconcilable breach. His language has been expropriated, and the historical dimension that nourished his knowledge, sapped.¹¹⁶

Life as an exile in the USA for Adorno is a binary choice between 'reproducing one's own existence' within mass culture, and 'impartial, responsible work'.¹¹⁷ Within this schematic, Weill is betraying his previous culture for a mere copy of it in the USA.¹¹⁸ This dichotomy has been troubled by cultural theorists like Stuart Hall, who suggests a broader understanding of cultural identity: 'it may be tempting to think of identity in the age of globalization as destined to end up in one place or another: either returning to its "roots" or disappearing through assimilation and homogenization. But this may be a false dilemma.'¹¹⁹ I would suggest that the 'Two Weills', the embarrassment at his taking on of America and at his immersing in American narratives and forms, and in fact any of the theorizing around Weill which proposes his assimilation or the division between Europe and America, is false. What Weill is betraying in refusing to follow idealized templates of exile, whether that be of the

¹¹⁵ Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 173.

¹¹⁶ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life*, trans. by E.F.N Jephcott (London: NLB, 1974), p. 33.

¹¹⁷ For a critical consideration of Adorno's experience as an exile in the USA see Martin Jay, *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 120-137.

¹¹⁸ Though I have already addressed that the theorist's opinion of Weill's work is less important than the way in which Adorno perceives Weill to operate.

¹¹⁹ Stuart Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity', in *Readings in Contemporary Political Sociology*, ed. Kate Nash, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), pp. 115-122 (p. 118).

composer or exile, is the fictional and romanticized conceptions of these processes.

Stuart Hall goes on to suggest a possibility that resists binary positioning, translation:

This describes those identity formations which cut across and intersect natural frontiers, and which are composed of people who have been dispersed forever from their homelands. Such people retain strong links with their places of origin and their traditions, but they are without the illusion of a return to the past. They are obliged to come to terms with the new cultures they inhabit, without simply assimilating to them and losing their identities completely. They bear upon them the traces of the particular cultures, traditions, languages and histories by which they were shaped.¹²⁰

I would suggest that the context of Weill as exile reveals the traces of the 'cultures, traditions, languages and histories' which contribute to his practice in the USA, and to the ways of thinking that have formed around that practice. Having established these, I now want to turn to his negotiation of American cultural industries.

¹²⁰ Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity', (pp. 118-119)

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

All artistic work, like all human activity, involves the joint activity of a number, often a large number, of people. Through their cooperation, the artwork we eventually see or hear comes to be and continues to be. The work always shows signs of that cooperation. The forms of cooperation may be ephemeral, but often become more or less routine, producing patterns of collective activity we can call an art world.¹

In this chapter I will explore Weill's entry into the American cultural industries during the second half of the 1930s. This can be understood as an entry process into several interconnected art worlds, each with its own network of 'collective activity'. In the early years of his exile Weill attempted to enter and participate in several of these worlds: firstly, Broadway theatre, commercial musical theatre and not-for-profit theatre; secondly, art music; and finally, the Hollywood film industry. In this chapter I will examine these art worlds further, unpicking the ways in which they operate and their unique properties. I will explore the exchanges of various kinds of capital which Weill engaged in when negotiating entry into these art worlds, through the use of two case studies. I shall consider his personal social capital (his own reputation and influence), and establish his shifting economic assets during this period.

WEILL'S REPUTATION IN EARLY EXILE – CASE STUDY 1

In this case study I will explore the cultural status Weill already possessed in the USA before his arrival, as well as considering what is meant by reputation. It is easy to suggest that Weill was completely unknown in New York, but his career in Europe had been discussed by publications as varied as the *New York Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Modern Music*. Examining this literature presents a complex picture of Weill, revealing a contemporary uneasiness with the cultural status of Weill's work even before he reached the USA and started writing musicals. This case study raises the possibility that

¹ Howard S. Becker, *Art worlds - 25th Anniversary Edition* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), p. 1.

the reaction to Weill's American work was not dissimilar to the already problematic reception of his German material. I will also examine the idea that Weill was already perceived before 1935 to be at the forefront of a new musical theatre.

WEILL'S ECONOMIC ASSETS IN EARLY EXILE - CASE STUDY 2

In this second case study, I will trace Weill's economic assets during his early exile, using the surviving evidence to follow his income during his moves between New York and Hollywood. In examining Weill's financial position, it is important to avoid the assumption often made around the pursuit of economic assets, in this case the implication that Weill 'sold out' to commercialism. In Chapter 1, I showed how the concept of Weill as a 'good' composer who was seduced by Broadway has been a powerful narrative in his posthumous reception, so this is clearly a concern.

Take for example the following: if we trace Weill's whereabouts from his arrival to his move to Hollywood and then back to New York, it seems fairly obvious that financial prospects were his main motivation, and, as I will establish, this is supported in the documentation. Such an incentive has generally been seen as avaricious; any need and desire on the part of an artist to make money (as opposed to any other worker/labourer) has been seen as detrimental to their reputation. Decisions made on the basis of commercial pressures are often presumed to have been artistic compromises, particularly in regard to Broadway and Hollywood. Thomas Postlewait notes that in various autobiographies of those involved in 1930s theatre, 'Hollywood is the most familiar – and most overworked – emblem of temptation and evil.'² There is, as I have already noted, a similar language around Weill's work in New York, note again Daniel Albright's Faustian comparison, 'Weill [...] sold his soul to Broadway'.³

² Thomas Postlewait, 'Sojourning in never never land; the idea of Hollywood in recent autobiographies', in *The American Stage: Social and Economic Issues from the Colonial Period to the Present*, ed. by Ron Engle and Tice L Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 235-251 (p. 243).

³ Daniel Albright, 'Kurt Weill as Modernist', *Modernism/Modernity* 7.2 (2000), 273-284 (p. 284).

If we are to consider Weill's actions precisely, it is necessary to acknowledge the presence of these judgements. Stepping beyond them allows us to remain open to new understandings; for instance addressing why Weill chose to single-handedly orchestrate his own work in this period, but later accepted assistance. This case study will also address Weill's need and desire to earn more money, and the consequential need to raise his own social capital to do so. By the end of this chapter, I will have established the processes through which Weill entered American cultural production, and further demonstrated the possibilities for the application of my methodology.

ART WORLDS IN AMERICA

I want to briefly consider what Weill was entering into, before addressing how the multiple art worlds that made up the cultural industries during this period have traditionally been conceived of in ways that imply hierarchies of genre and value. This is particularly evident in the terminology used around music; art music has come to take the place of classical, serious, or high music, but this term still implies creativity and a hierarchy in which art music is positioned in opposition to commercial or popular music. I would suggest that Howard Becker's concept of art worlds enables us to create groupings defined less by the type and value of the product, but rather by its process of production. This allows discussions of Weill's activities in exile to be liberated from connotations of how worthwhile or important they were.

Within American art worlds in the 1930s and 1940s, cultural industries as a whole could be seen as a meta-level of production. This could be sub-classified into art worlds engaging in different kinds of cultural production with interdependent networks of professions, agents, and institutions.⁴ Any individual agent may operate within several art worlds, and personally carry out a variety of tasks. Becker suggests that 'to analyse an art world we look for its characteristic kinds of workers and the bundle of tasks each one does.'⁵ In

⁴ Unfortunately, both the traditional uses in sociology to describe those individuals within networks, agents and actors, have particular meaning within theatre studies. Unless stated otherwise, I use agents to mean all individuals and institutions within the network and art world.

⁵ Becker, p. 9.

the case of musical theatre, Weill acts as a composer, orchestrator, vocal arranger, dance arranger, and, very often, as a producer, instigating and cajoling a project along. Weill works within several art worlds, including Hollywood, Broadway, and radio; as a result, he is able to act as a bridge between those groupings. This kind of bridging role can be seen elsewhere, say, in the case of a costume designer who works in opera and musical theatre. Each different kind of cultural production operates on a macro-level where groups can be defined by the nature of the product itself, whether that be stage performance, visual arts, music, film and so on. Finally on a micro-level, further divisions can be observed between conditions of production and reception.

Relying on this approach allows the value judgements that are often implied in the terminology to be recognised and set aside. For theatre, Becker's method allows the separation without prejudice of that which is commercially funded (and whose production process is based on investment, recoupment, and the necessary expectation of profit), from that which is based on institutional or personal patronage (without the expectation of financial return). It breaks away from limiting questions of value and instead allows us to observe the operations of the professional networks that support these production processes.

I want to expand on this in reference to the art worlds Weill was entering, firstly, in relation to the Broadway theatre which is the focus of this thesis. This art world is sustained by the formation and reformation of small clusters of a network of professional practitioners around individual productions: with each production, a new set of connections are made. Some institutions within the network employ staff continuously (for example, a theatre employs a certain number of orchestra members), but then take on work on a project basis. Further examples include production offices, which might employ permanent assistants, or set builders who employ long-term staff. During this period, it is possible to observe art worlds around commercial theatre alongside those which operate outside of commercial necessity and are either state funded (e.g. the Federal Theatre), or supported by private patronage (the Group Theatre). In this latter kind of theatre production, the supporting

network may be grouped organisationally, rather than by individuals. The production process may have more of a sense of continuity, since new productions do not automatically cause the same repeated formation and dissolution of a cluster.

Secondly, in the case of art music's art world, the traditional stipulation for inclusion has been the artist's autonomy. I have already dismantled this at length as a mystification of the role of the composer, and the changing conditions of production and reception within which they work, whether that is court, church, or individual patronage. Despite mythology to the contrary, the composer has always operated like the artist, who, Becker suggests, 'works in the centre of a network of cooperating people all of whose work is essential to the final outcome.'⁶ These people can include instrument makers, repairers, orchestrators, arrangers, copyists, conductors, musicians, and audiences. The supporting network is made up of individual and institutional connections (for example, a composer may be linked directly to a conductor by prior performances of their work).

Thirdly, Weill's work in theatre opened up personal connections within the Hollywood film industry, which operated in much the same way as theatre, with a project based network. Candace Jones notes, in reference to the contemporary film industry, that its network 'is constantly being created and recreated. Firms and subcontractors combine for specific projects, disband when the project is finished, and then combine for new projects – often with differing participants.'⁷ These processes can also be observed during the period in question, which suggests obvious parallels to commercial musical theatre; though producers may not necessarily be individuals, but rather firms (e.g. Paramount or Warner Brothers) who hire professionals on a project or multi-project basis.

⁶ Becker, p. 25.

⁷ Candace Jones, 'Careers in Project Networks: the Case of the Film Industry', in *The Boundaryless Career: A New Employment Principle for a New Organizational Era*, ed. by Michael Arthur Bernard and Denise M. Rousseau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 58-75 (p. 58).

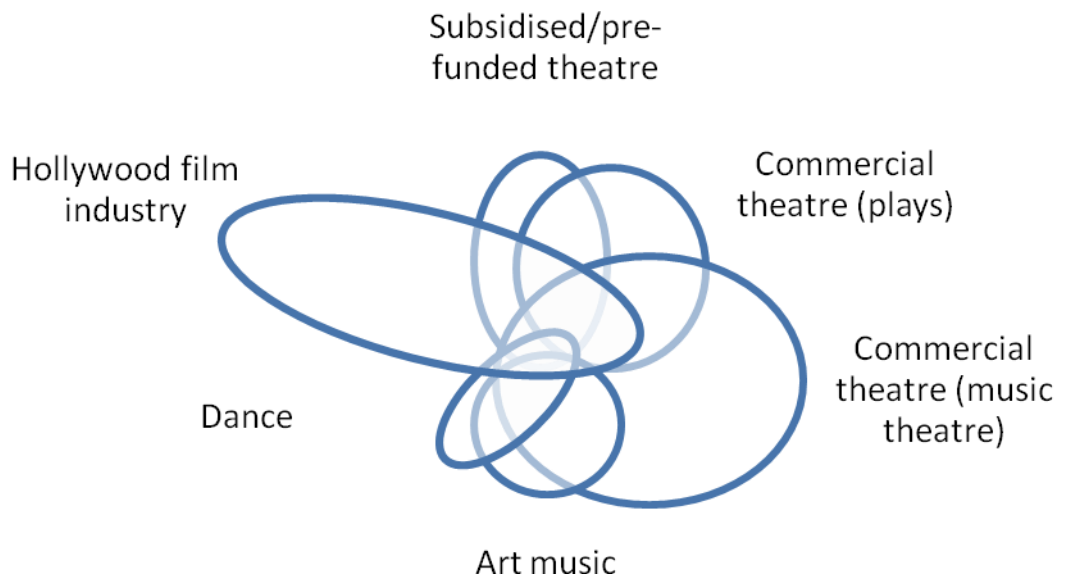
Each of these networks shares several qualities. They have in common an established training tradition (perhaps formal qualifications or informal apprenticeships) which provides an underlying foundation shared between individuals in a network. This connection between practitioners may not be immediately obvious: Ric Knowles notes that ‘among the material conditions of production that shape meaning in the theatre, training and tradition function as perhaps the determinants least immediately apparent to audiences.’⁸ Nonetheless, training provides collective traditions, and a shared language and approach to labour.

During the 1930s and 1940s, such training might have involved apprenticeships or amateur theatre productions. Subsidised theatre may have inadvertently acted as a training ground for commercial theatre, so inexperienced theatre professionals learned their trade within the not-for-profit sector, and then moved into the commercial arena. This leads to a relationship of dependence between the commercial and the subsidised sectors. The complex interconnectivity between art worlds may not just be a result of working relationships, but also common conditions of production such as training. During the 1930s, transfers of skilled professionals from Broadway to Hollywood were commonplace in the case of actors, writers, directors, and composers (including of course Weill). The relatively recently established Hollywood film industry clearly relied on Broadway’s network of trained and experienced professionals.

To sum up, each networked community exists under the meta-art world or umbrella of the creative industries alongside other mediums, for example the visual arts and literature. The specialised skills necessary for each art world are often common to several others, so individuals or organisations that make up the network may frequently cross over and share resources. (See fig. 5, for an example of how this contorted Venn diagram might look).

⁸ Ric Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre: Theatre and Performance Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 24.

FIGURE 5 - VISUALISING INTERCONNECTED ART WORLDS



These crossover points might include any number of agents or institutions, for example: composers who work in commercial theatre and art music, critics who review commercial and subsidised theatre, and set designers or choreographers who work across musical theatre and subsidised dance.

At the point of Weill's arrival in 1935, it is possible to observe intricate levels of involvement between art worlds, partly as a result of the Depression's political consequences. The Federal Theatre project, the Group Theatre, and the Theatre Guild all connected individuals and institutions working within multiple art worlds. There are also crossovers between art music and Broadway; for example, George Balanchine's choreography for Broadway follies and musicals, and George Gershwin's Broadway opera *Porgy and Bess*. This fluidity can be seen in Weill's collaborative practice: in the case of the Group Theatre producing a musical, or 'legit' playwright Maxwell Anderson collaborating with Weill on *Knickerbocker Holiday*.

EXCHANGES OF CAPITAL

I want to suggest that Weill's negotiation of his entry into these networks further reveals how they operated, exposing how they were sustained and the

kinds of exchanges of capital that facilitated their continued existence. In Broadway musical theatre, where new productions create a set of fresh connections between practitioners, the act of being hired might seem to be the initial point of entry. However, the continuation of these networks relies on shared information and context, a shared knowledge and professional understanding. In Weill's case, whether his entry point was the planned production of *The Eternal Road* or his subsequent meeting with Cheryl Crawford, the question remains as to what exactly made his original inclusion possible: what made him a good choice for a collaborator? In other words, why and how is any new figure able to enter the established network?

Why does one person or institution choose to work with another? At every moment of connection there exists an acquisition and deployment of social capital: someone has enough of a reputation to be offered a job, someone is well connected or valuable enough to be offered remuneration for the deployment of their skills and services. The initial negotiation of entry into this network has to be based on a similar exchange; what did Weill have to offer in order to get in, and what did he receive in return? Each network is built on exchanges of both economic assets and cultural or reputational capital, fuelled by social capital.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Since the term social capital will be used so often in this chapter, it is helpful to clarify what exactly is meant by it, and how the idea has been previously applied to the musical. Pierre Bourdieu locates social capital within a network itself: 'social capital is the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrues to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.'⁹ John Field's very brief but clear description of the central thesis of ideas about social capital is useful in thinking about art worlds, he notes it 'can be summed up in two words; relationships matter.'¹⁰ Nan Lin places the concept within economics: 'the premise behind the notion of social capital is rather

⁹ Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 119.

¹⁰ John Field, *Social Capital: Key Ideas* (Oxford: Routledge, 2008), p. 1.

simple and straightforward; *investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace.*'¹¹ Lin illustrates that the idea is used across a variety of academic fields: 'the market chosen for analysis may be economic, political, labour, or community. Individuals engage in interactions and networking in order to produce profits.'¹² Social capital theories suggest that the connections between individuals or organisations are inherently valuable, and form part of a transaction between participants in an established network.

The network structure which supports commercial Broadway musical theatre has been of particular interest to sociologists. This is primarily because of its project by project employment structure. Agents within the network repeatedly form new companies (in both the theatrical and industrial sense of the word) to facilitate collaborations which are gradually dissolved when the production opens on Broadway. The transition from development and active rehearsal into maintaining an established performance, once the production has opened, severely curtails the number of contractors, for example: the set and costumes are made and may only need repairs and alterations, the dance routines have been learnt and may only need maintenance by the dance captain, and so on. Though directors, composers, and lyricists may be linked to a production by name once it has opened, they may only have minimal direct involvement and can then move on to other new productions. Those who are left (actors, stage management, orchestra members, and perhaps an assistant director) may leave as and when contracts expire in the case of a long run, or become unemployed when a show is closed. In either case, they presumably leave with the hope of finding new employment on a different production.

Consequently, every new production expands and strengthens the art world's supporting network. Previously connected professionals strengthen their working relationships by collaborating together once again. New agents entering the network gain their first set of connections. So Weill's first production generated many new links to the various professionals he

¹¹ [Emphasis in original.] Nan Lin, *Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 19.

¹² Lin, p. 19.

encountered; each of his subsequent Broadway productions established more new connections and strengthened existing ones. Many of the agents Weill came into contact with would have been established within the network, and themselves connected to many others. This creates for Weill a highly interlinked environment, which is demonstrated by Weill's introduction to Maxwell Anderson having been instigated by Cheryl Crawford and the Group Theatre.¹³ This structure has been examined at length in sociology. In their paper 'Collaboration and Creativity: The Small World Problem', Brian Uzzi and Jarrett Spirro examine the musical theatre industry from 1945 to the mid-1980s. They suggest that in this art world (though they do not use this term), 'the clusters can be linked by persons who are members of multiple clusters, making it possible for even large communities that are made up of many separate clusters to be connected and cohesive.'¹⁴ (Clusters here relates to productions.)

Weill already had direct connections with members of several art worlds at the point of his arrival in New York. For example, American critics had reviewed his European works and he had met George Gershwin in Berlin.¹⁵ Crawford explains her own reasons for working with Weill: '[he] was eager to do something with an American background, and given my perennial fondness for good popular music, I was eager to work with him.'¹⁶ Crawford indicates her prior awareness of Weill's reputation and his popular success in Europe. The particular social capital Weill possessed was useful to her: the perception of Weill as a modernist European who had worked with Brecht. Weill presumably took the job with Crawford for a variety of reasons: to gain a reputation for being able to write something 'American', to remain in New York, and because he needed an income. Weill exchanged his reputation for some economic assets, and to advance his cultural capital as a composer

¹³ According to Foster Hirsch, Weill and Anderson met at 'a Group Theatre gathering in the fall of 1936'. Foster Hirsch, *Kurt Weill on Stage: From Berlin to Broadway* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), p. 163.

¹⁴ Brian Uzzi and Jarret Spirro, 'Collaboration and Creativity: The Small World Problem', *American Journal of Sociology*, 111 (2005), 447-504 (p. 451).

¹⁵ Howard Pollack, *George Gershwin: His Life and Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 142.

¹⁶ Cheryl Crawford, *One Naked Individual: My Fifty Years in the Theatre* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977), p. 91.

capable of engaging with American material. The social capital he possessed facilitated this. However useful he was to Crawford's needs and ambitions, the connection was pivotal for Weill as it allowed him entry and progression through the not-for-profit network into commercial theatre. The theory around social capital directly addresses this process, as Nan Lin explains:

Social ties located in certain strategic locations and/or hierarchical positions (and thus better informed on market needs and demands) can provide an individual with useful information about opportunities and choices otherwise not available. Likewise, these ties (or their ties) may alert an organization (be it in the production or consumption market) and its agents, or even a community, about the availability and interest of an otherwise unrecognized individual.¹⁷

Crawford's strategic location allowed her to alert other members of the network to the potential Weill offered, so it is possible to observe how she operates as a kind of broker. Through her brokerage Weill was able to gain access to her connections and to her social resources (something Lin defines as 'resources accessed through an individual's social connections').¹⁸ In fact, her generosity did not end there: during a period of financial hardship, Crawford allowed Weill and his wife to live in her apartment. This is a practical example of exactly what social capital allows access to. Lin suggests even 'a car borrowed from a friend to move household goods' is an 'example [...] of the use of social resources'.¹⁹

CASE STUDY 1 - WEILL'S REPUTATION

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY REPUTATION?

Once again, it is important to guard against value judgements. Though there would appear to be a connection between reputational and social capital, the reality is much more complex. Jann Pasler suggests that reputation 'is the fruit of talents, knowledge, and achievements that attract attention. It signals renown, the way in which someone is known in public or the sum of values commonly associated with a person.'²⁰ However, achievements are defined by

¹⁷ Lin, p. 20.

¹⁸ Lin, p. 21.

¹⁹ Lin, p. 20.

²⁰ Jann Pasler, 'Deconstructing d'Indy, or the Problem of a Composer's Reputation', *19th-Century Music*, 30 (2007), 230-256 (p. 230).

the environment in which they are created. Howard Becker argues that reputations are the result of 'the collective activity of art worlds'.²¹ Reputations necessarily rely on a pre-existing apparatus through which they are formed, as Becker suggests:

For reputations to arise and persist, critics and aestheticians must establish theories of art and criteria by which art, good art, and great art can be distinguished and identified. Without those criteria, no one could make the judgement of works, genres, or media on which the judgements of artists depend.²²

Becker identifies that art worlds credit particular media with reputations. He identifies that 'the reputation of the medium is a judgement as to the possibility of doing serious, important, or great art in it.'²³ This is clear in the case of music, where opera is privileged over musicals, and the more-like-opera musicals (integrated musicals) are privileged over those which are not.

WEILL IN *MODERN MUSIC*

On arrival in the USA, Weill was able to negotiate entry into the art music network on the basis of his prior connections and established reputation. His work had already received press, and once there, he personally intervened in developing and refining his reputation further. I have already established an example of this in his concern about how he was presented within the press over *The Opera from Mannheim*. I will now explore these two aspects in detail, and clearly establish the kind of public discourse that took place around the composer.

Weill's work had received attention in the mainstream press, as well as in *Modern Music*, a specialist journal published by the League of Composers. This journal provides a detailed record of the art world's responses to Weill, reflecting both the criteria he was judged by and his reception within these boundaries. *Modern Music* was established in 1924, and ran for 22 years as a serious music review focusing on new European and American work. In its third issue, an unsigned editorial introduction explains its purpose: 'We believe that not only is too little modern music played, but that too little is

²¹ Becker, p. 360.

²² Becker, p. 360.

²³ Becker, p. 359.

written about it.’²⁴ The editorial clarifies the aim of encouraging audience familiarity with modern music: ‘by publishing authoritative and discerning criticism it is our hope to rouse the public out of a somnolent tolerance to a live appreciation of the new in music.’²⁵ Music critics and composers were to contribute to the journal in a bid to allow all voices to be heard: ‘No school or dogma will be championed. Our sole intention is to bring forward the ideas of men who have chosen to lift their eyes from the certainties of the past to read the portents of their time.’²⁶ (Though *Modern Music* was edited by a woman, Minna Lederman, the emphasis on men who have dared to break away from the ‘certainties of the past’ is indicative of both the field and its period.) Despite these grand aims, the magazine was intended only for League subscribers and to ‘a special list of those interested in modern music’, and so did not reach a wide readership.²⁷ Within the art music art world however, it had major importance. This is clear from the list of regular contributors, which included Edwin Denby, Elliott Carter, Alfred Einstein, Virgil Thomson, and Aaron Copland.²⁸

I will now examine the discourse around Weill before and after his arrival and, in particular, his reputation within the pages of *Modern Music*.

BEFORE HIS ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK

Weill had received considerable attention in New York before his arrival. In response to the European success of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, Weill had even been

²⁴ ‘Untitled introduction’, *Modern Music*, I. 3 (November 1924), 1 (p.1)

²⁵ ‘Untitled introduction’, (p.1)

²⁶ ‘Untitled introduction’, (p.1)

²⁷ ‘Untitled introduction’, (p.1)

²⁸ Eric Salzman’s inclusive list is worth including here, as it reflects the sheer range of contributors, ‘The principal commentators, writers, and reviewers over the years included Aaron Copland, Roger Sessions, Frederic Jacobi, Lazare Saminsky, Louis Gruenberg, George Antheil, Marc Blitzstein, Virgil Thomson, Colin McPhee, Israel Citkowitz, Theodore Chanler, Elliott Carter, Arthur Berger, Leonard Bernstein, Paul Bowles, Charles Mills, Arthur Cohn, Lou Harrison, Donald Fuller, Irving Fine, and John Cage. Some of the magazine’s other correspondents were Casella, Kodaly, Roussel, Pisk, Searle, Dallapiccola; the by-lines of Bartók, Berg, Britten, Cowell, Krenek, Milhaud, Schoenberg, and Shostakovich appear. There are others.’ Eric Salzman, ‘*Modern Music in Retrospect*’, *Perspectives of New Music*, 2. 2 (1964), 14–20 (p. 14).

nominated for *Vanity Fair*'s annual Hall of Fame in 1933 (though one hopes that Brecht never caught sight of their reasoning):

Because he is a leading young German composer of both serious and lighter music; because, a student of Busoni, he developed his own melodious operatic style in his score for *The Threepenny Opera* [...] which was a success on the international stage and screen: because, also a librettist and director, he produced his two new operas *Mahogany* [sic] and *Burgschaft* [sic] in Berlin.²⁹

Those who had taken an active interest in European music in the late 1920s and early 1930s would have had several opportunities to read about Weill's career, as it was well charted in the serious music pages of the *New York Times*, and in *Modern Music*. In the *Times* he was frequently mentioned in the 'Notes from Abroad' music columns, as well as in musicologist Alfred Einstein's articles. They covered the European premieres, giving particular attention to the furore over the opening of *Mahagonny* in 1927. Einstein reported that 'he who holds fast to the traditional concept of opera will be as scandalized as was the greater portion of the Leipzig public, who left the hall silently or who registered their protests vehemently by hissing or whistling. The result was naturally a notorious scandal.'³⁰ Einstein reflected on the European nature of the work, informing his readers that:

'*Mahagonny*' will not reach America. It is musical fare that is far too strong. If this work makes the rounds of Germany, it will be due to the music of Weill and will be produced as an example of transitory period opera, perhaps as a halting place in the day's march towards the goal - opera of the future for the masses.³¹

The *New York Times* also covered the 1927 premiere of *Royal Palace*, quoting the *Frankfurter Zeitung*: 'The music of Kurt Weill is the work of a man specially gifted for the theatre. It is astounding how this young man commands the technique of the orchestra. One senses a cool, calculating intelligence directing

²⁹ 'We Nominate for the Hall of Fame - Kurt Weill', *Vanity Fair*, 40, August 1933, p. 35.

³⁰ Alfred Einstein, 'Weill's "*Mahagonny*": "Chamber Opera," Given at Baden-Baden in 1927, Expanded to Full Length Work', *New York Times*, 28 March 1930, section Arts & Leisure, p. 129.

³¹ Einstein, 'Weill's "*Mahagonny*"', p. 129.

the practical routine.’³² They subsequently reported on the court case between Brecht and Weill over the *Dreigroschenoper* film in 1930, noting Weill’s victory.³³

Significant portions of Weill’s music had been played in the USA before his arrival. In 1925, *Die Zaubernacht* was performed at the Garrick Theatre, New York, and in 1930 Weill’s Violin Concerto (op. 12) received its American premiere in Cincinnati. *Der Lindberghflug* was given a full radio broadcast in George Antheil’s English translation in 1931.³⁴ The *Christian Science Monitor* congratulated Weill: ‘this radio cantata is one of the few important choral works produced by contemporary music, [...] and particularly welcome as a refutation of the general notion that the young guard of modern music lack feeling and heart.’³⁵ In the same paper, Paul Bechert wrote a 1930 article which commended Weill and Krenek as ‘young modernists’ taking up the challenge of operatic production, noting that both had ‘interesting new works at hand.’³⁶

In April 1933, *Dreigroschenoper* opened on Broadway in an English translation by Gifford Cochrane and Jerrold Krimsy. Though it had been successfully produced in many versions around Europe, it was not well received in New York and closed after only twelve performances. Weill had planned to attend, but was somewhat preoccupied with his impending escape to France. The production met with ‘generally unfavourable reviews.’³⁷

³² ‘The Royal Palace’, *New York Times*, 3 April 1927, section Drama-Music-Fashion-Screen, p. X8.

³³ Mishkin, ‘Notes from Overseas’, *New York Times*, 23 November 1930, section Arts & Leisure, p. 118.

³⁴ All basic biographical facts such as these concerning Weill’s life and works are taken from the relevant pages in the KWF’s chronology: Kurt Weill Foundation, ‘Kurt Weill - A Chronology’, *Kurt Weill Foundation Web Site* <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/kurt-weill/chronology>> [accessed 2 October 2009].

³⁵ L.A. Sloper, ‘A Musical Version of the Paris Hop: Transatlantic Drama on the Wing’, *Christian Science Monitor*, 4 April 1931, section The Radio Playhouse, p. 4.

³⁶ Paul Bechert, ‘Verdi Comeback’, *Christian Science Monitor*, 8 March 1930, p. 133.

³⁷ *Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents*, ed. by David Farneth, Elmar Juchem and Dave Stein (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), p. 135.

Though Weill was by no means famous in the USA, music journalists had covered his career, and his inclusion in *Vanity Fair* would suggest that this familiarity could have extended to the cognoscenti of New York society. In the American social network around art music in the 1920s and early 1930s, it is clear that Weill's German work had attracted serious attention. *Modern Music* had covered at some length what Eric Salzman calls the 'phenomenon of Kurt Weill'.³⁸ Weill's music was reviewed with increasing frequency as his fame grew during the 1920s; it provoked a range of responses from a variety of contributors including Adolph Weissman, George Antheil, Hans Gutman, Mark Blitzstein, Copland, and Thomas. Salzman suggests that the opinions expressed in the pages of the journal become ubiquitous:

Nearly every important international personality and trend that preceded the developments of recent years is already present and defined in the first issues - and the definitions, judgments, and controversies are often the same as those which are most frequently encountered today.³⁹

Copland reviewed the *Mahagonny* opera in 1927, informing the reader that Weill 'is the new *enfant terrible* of Germany'.⁴⁰ Copland was resolutely unimpressed, noting that 'Weill is not without musical gifts but these are too often sacrificed for the sake of a questionable dramatic effectiveness'.⁴¹ Weissman also objected, with particular reference to *Royal Palace*: 'nothing especially interesting has been contributed by the composer'.⁴² He felt that there was a lack of importance placed upon the score: 'the spectator can hardly attend to the music which is almost relegated to the role of accompaniment for a movie'.⁴³ His assessment was that Weill 'is not to be classed with Krenek in any respect'.⁴⁴ This criticism points to a general discomfort with the way in which Weill apparently disturbed an established cultural hierarchy.

³⁸ Salzman, 'Modern Music', (p. 16).

³⁹ Salzman, 'Modern Music', (p. 15).

⁴⁰ Aaron Copland, 'Forecast and Review, Baden-Baden, 1927', *Modern Music*, V.1 (Nov-Dec 1927), 31-34 (p. 32).

⁴¹ Copland, 'Forecast and Review', (p. 32).

⁴² Adolph Weissmann, 'Germany's Latest Music Dramas', *Modern Music*, IV.4 (May-Jun 1927), 20-26 (p. 25).

⁴³ Weissmann, 'Music Dramas', (p. 25).

⁴⁴ Weissmann, 'Music Dramas', (p. 25).

Marc Blitzstein was infuriated by the apparent devaluation of music by Weill and his contemporaries. Blitzstein struggled to understand the shift in emphasis from serious music to popular music, a move he derided as 'a wave of infantilism'.⁴⁵ He blamed it on 'a loss of the "constant" values, an artistic inferiority complex, an upheaval in the technical body of music, and the abandon and excitement of the years succeeding the war.'⁴⁶ Impassioned, he explained to the reader:

We find a dependence upon folk-elements, out doing anything existing before along that line. And everywhere we find a search for materials, resources, where they had never been sought, when music seemed fresh. [...] The generation was in full flight from 'culture', high-mindedness, and civilised music.⁴⁷

Blitzstein felt that 'popular music [had] invaded the concert hall'.⁴⁸ He particularly abhorred Weill's 'sentimental ballads'⁴⁹ and 'super bourgeois ditties'.⁵⁰ He found the emphasis on *Gebrauchsmusik* troubling, because he felt its proponents, composers such as Weill, 'abjectly copied what the mob had already learned to like. Instead of educating, it pandered.'⁵¹ The 'dissolution of a one-time genuine article' was a wasted opportunity, for a public who had been 'ripe to learn'.⁵² He compared the 'reaching down' of serious music to the inappropriate 'reaching up' of popular composers, with particular reference to Gershwin.⁵³ Blitzstein argued that popular music had resisted the invasions of serious composers, and that serious music should learn a lesson from 'this persistently "low" art, in a matter of discovering one's place, and respecting it.'⁵⁴ (These words are in themselves rather surprising, given Blitzstein's later evangelical promotion of Weill and Brecht's work, and particularly his own opera *The Cradle Will Rock*. Blitzstein's public 'conversion' would later be

⁴⁵ Marc Blitzstein, 'Popular Music - An Invasion, 1923-1933', *Modern Music*, X.2 (1933), 96-102 (p. 99).

⁴⁶ Blitzstein, 'Popular Music', (p. 99).

⁴⁷ Blitzstein, 'Popular Music', p. 99).

⁴⁸ Blitzstein, 'Popular Music', (p. 98),

⁴⁹ Blitzstein, 'Popular Music', (p. 98).

⁵⁰ Blitzstein, 'Popular Music', (p. 101).

⁵¹ Blitzstein, 'Popular Music', p. 101).

⁵² Blitzstein, 'Popular Music', (p. 101).

⁵³ Blitzstein, 'Popular Music', (p. 101).

⁵⁴ Blitzstein, 'Popular Music', (p. 102).

expressed in response to *Johnny Johnson*, in a review I will examine in the next chapter, see pages 213-214.)

It is clear that Weill was seen by critics to be disturbing the boundaries between art music and popular music even when in Germany. His reputation within the American musical academy demonstrates a discrepancy between the recognition of his 'musical gifts' (to quote Copland), and an embarrassment with the sheer inappropriateness of his actions. Weill's reputation before he entered the USA was not straightforward: he was not assumed to be a 'high' or 'serious' composer. Instead, critics struggled with the range of his activities, and his connection to popular music.

In 1933, Virgil Thomson responded to Weill's apparent meddling with cultural hierarchies, this time in relation to *Seven Deadly Sins* in Paris. Thomson praised the authenticity of Weill's music in its representation of the ghetto:

He has thrown a certain aspect of it sharply against the sky. He has touched hearts. He has almost created style. One can be indifferent to the subject-matter. One cannot say that the work is non-existent or entirely low. Its authenticity, plus the fact that it is all very easy to understand, is why it is so eagerly received by the Paris fashionables ever alert for a new kind of gutter.⁵⁵

Thomson made a particular connection between Weill and Charpentier's 1900 opera *Louise* – a precedent for Puccini's later *verismo* work. Though Thomson commended Weill's 'warm heart and a first-class prosodic gift', he qualified his praise by noting, 'Weill is not a Great Composer any more than Charpentier is'.⁵⁶ Thomson was troubled by what he saw as sentimentality: 'it smells of Hollywood. It is hokum like *Louise*, sincere hokum. If it really touches you, you go all to pieces inside. If not, it is still something anyway, though not so much.'⁵⁷ Again, Weill is seen to be challenging the accepted boundaries between high and low music. The idea that Weill's music 'smells of Hollywood' even before he left Europe, demonstrates a continuity in reactions to the composer. Thomson rather grudgingly concluded that:

⁵⁵ Virgil Thomson, 'Most Melodious Tears', *Modern Music*, XI.1 (Nov-Dec 1933), 13-17 (p. 14).

⁵⁶ Thomson, 'Most Melodious Tears', (p. 17).

⁵⁷ Thomson, 'Most Melodious Tears', (p. 17).

The line between hokum and real stuff is far from sharp. Many a serious career has been made in the no man's land that lies between the two, provided there was talent and a sincere passion about something or other, like Byron with his loves or Toulouse-Lautrec and his night-life. Let him who has never wept at the movies throw the first stone at Weill's tearful but elegant ditties about the Berlin ghetto.⁵⁸

A similar discomfort is clear in Hans Gutman's review of the 1930 *Mahagonny* opera, which simultaneously praises and dismisses Weill's music. Gutman explained Weill's origins: 'a pupil of the great reformer Busoni, Weill began with the usual labour of the serious composers.'⁵⁹ He suggested that in Weill's work so far, 'we admired his craftsmanship and deplored the great lack of melodic substance.'⁶⁰ He argued that this was particularly apparent in *Mahagonny*, where the composer 'has attempted to develop a new melodic line in the larger dimensions of an orchestra. His success has been uneven.'⁶¹

Having dismissed Weill's orchestral abilities, Gutman went on: 'the effect is strongest when songs are to the fore.'⁶² He suggested that 'Weill's style [...] can be used in every kind of music, although it seems least appropriate to the operatic genre.'⁶³ The praise given to Weill's song form emphasised its inappropriateness within opera, implying that it was an improper cultural ambition. Gutman proposed that *Mahagonny* moved outside the established field of opera: '[it] is really anything but an opera; it is rather the starting point for a new musical theatre.'⁶⁴ To be clear, there are no direct value judgements in Gutman's description. The general tone of his argument fits into a picture of Weill presented by *Modern Music* as a seriously trained composer doing strange things, acting outside the expected pattern of behaviour. This echoes Howard Becker's suggestion that specific media are privileged within art worlds. In the hierarchy projected in *Modern Music*, opera is a more valuable and appropriate medium to be working within than theatre or film music. By

⁵⁸ Thomson, 'Most Melodious Tears', (p. 17).

⁵⁹ Hans Gutman, 'The German Opera Season Reviewed - *Mahagonny* and Other Novelties', *Modern Music*, VII.7 (1930), 32-36 (p. 34).

⁶⁰ Gutman, 'Opera Season', (p. 34).

⁶¹ Gutman, 'Opera Season', (p. 34).

⁶² Gutman, 'Opera Season', (p. 34).

⁶³ Gutman, 'Opera Season', (p. 34).

⁶⁴ Gutman, 'Opera Season', (p. 35).

moving outside of the accepted bands of cultural activity, Weill is seen to be engaged in a less valuable endeavour.

Composer and critic George Antheil referred to Weill in an article entitled 'Wanted - Opera by and for Americans'.⁶⁵ Antheil was attempting to highlight what he felt was a desperate need for an American music form which could reach the public. He pointed to *Dreigroschenoper*, noting that even though the music was 'extremely modern [...] nevertheless all over the continent one can hear almost every shop girl singing its melodies.'⁶⁶ Antheil's article connected Weill to the possibility of a modern music that could reach a broad audience. If Weill could do it in Europe, it could be achieved in the USA:

For "modern" music must continue to belong to the people, as it has in the great operatic periods of the past. A public of music lovers should come to the music theatre from all walks of life in America. From this vast group, trained through the theatre to understand the essence and reason of modern music, a new symphonic public will gradually be formed, a public that is able to project itself completely into the abstract of symphonic music.⁶⁷

Antheil was implicitly advocating that music theatre should be used to prepare an audience for an immersion in symphonic music. This artistic 'bait and switch' implies an established hierarchy of genres, in which the public can be reeled in by something accessible and then be trained to understand something harder. This would suggest Antheil is proposing something culturally better than the 'bait' of theatre music, something more valuable, when he uses the expression 'the abstract of symphonic music'.

Since *Modern Music* had no official editorial stance on composers, the material relating to Weill presents a complex picture. The various positions on his work reveal expectations about a composer and the sense that Weill is not necessarily obeying them. To summarise, then: Copland's suggestion that Weill sacrificed his musical gifts 'for the sake of questionable dramatic effectiveness' implies that the composer should privilege their music over the needs of the drama. The drama should be incidental, a suggestion also present

⁶⁵ George Antheil, 'Wanted - Opera by and for Americans', *Modern Music*, VII (1930), 11-16.

⁶⁶ Antheil, 'Wanted - Opera', (p. 11).

⁶⁷ Antheil, 'Wanted', (p. 12).

in Weissman's criticism of *Royal Palace* (that the music resembled a film score). Blitzstein's disgust with the infantilism of European music, as practised by the composers of *Gebrauchsmusik*, again reveals a desire for artistic purity. This is confirmed in Hans Gutman's suggestion that the song is a diluted form of proper music. Antheil presents an expectation that Weill's success in Europe could be a template for the mass appeal of modern music, through which 'pure' autonomous music could be heard by ordinary people.

There is no consensus on Weill's reputation. Instead, these articles all present an important figure who is seen to interfere between cultural forms. Even before 1935, Weill is perceived as defying expectations of artistic autonomy. There is a sense of disappointment in Weill, even in this early criticism. This suggests that the themes of the critical discourse around Weill had been established before he had even entered the USA. Weill already disturbed notions of the proper, well-behaved composer.

WEILL'S ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK

Unlike some exiles, Weill's arrival in New York did not receive specific coverage by the *New York Times*, but this may be because his stay was presumed to be a visit rather than a permanent relocation.⁶⁸ His involvement with *The Eternal Road* (then called *The Road of Promise*) was noted by the press, and several newspapers interviewed Weill about the planned production. In October 1935, the *Times* ran an interview under the headline 'Kurt Weill's New Score [...] Written in Modern Contemporary Style':

Although traditional Hebrew music of the synagogue has been drawn upon to a certain extent for the score of "*The Road of Promise*", the elaborate Jewish morality play schedule to be presented here by Max Reinhardt in December, modernism will be rampant in the tonal investiture given the spectacle by Kurt Weill, the modernist German opera composer.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ David Josephson, 'The Exile of European Music - Documentation of Upheaval and Immigration in the New York Times', in *Driven into Paradise - The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States*, ed. by Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 92-152 (p. 104).

⁶⁹ N.S., 'Kurt Weill's New Score: Music for 'Road of Promise' Written in Modern Contemporary Style', *New York Times*, 27 October 1935, section

An interview with Weill in December 1935 with the *New York World Telegram* introduced him as a 'visitor' to America, noting his 'wide fame and fortune' in Europe, commenting on the special concert featuring some of his German music held in his honour by the League of Composers (who were behind *Modern Music*).⁷⁰ The *Times* reported on the same concert: 'The compositions of Weill [...] are those of a modern who studied under Busoni and has had experience of the theatre. They have made him a figure among the younger composers of modern Germany.'⁷¹ The interviews Weill carried out in early exile allowed him to clarify his position in the USA, and form the public persona he presented to the press and to his peers.

WEILL SHAPES HIS OWN REPUTATION

It is obvious, when examining Weill's interviews and dealings with the press during this period, that he was aware of his own public image and the importance of negotiating with the media to refine his reputation. As I have noted, he gave several interviews in the popular press in both newspapers and magazines in which he presented his own version of his work and ambitions. He also gave lectures on at least two occasions, and wrote two detailed essays, one in November 1936 for *Stage* magazine, and the other in July 1937 for *Modern Music*. Both articles clarify his opinions on the future of theatre, its social purpose, and his own theoretical vision. Within what survives of this material, Weill repeatedly addresses several key areas, clarifying and expanding on his own position. In this *New York World Telegram* interview with Douglas Gilbert, about the planned opening of *The Eternal Road* in 1935, Weill addresses modernism:

Drama-Screen-Music Dance-Shoppers Columns Art-Fashion-Radio Gardens, p. X7.

⁷⁰ R.C.B., 'Kurt Weill Has Secured Niche of His Own at 35 - He's Visiting Here in the Interest of His Incidental Music to "The Eternal Road" - Explains Role of Jazz', *New York World Telegram*, 21 December 1935, in <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/347-kurt-weill-has-secured-niche>> [accessed 17 April 2009].

⁷¹ 'Weill Works Are Given: Compositions From His Operas Sung at Cosmopolitan Club', *New York Times*, 18 December 1935, in <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=97150799&Fmt=10&clientId=13766&RQT=309&VName=HNP>> [accessed 23 April 2008].

I am essentially a theatrical composer. I have been called 'modernistic'. I do not know what they mean by 'modernistic'. If they mean that I compose atonal (discords to the lay ear) music they are wrong. My music is melodic - and theatrical - in the sense that it tries not to distract the audience, but to accent the play.⁷²

Weill portrays himself as primarily concerned about the theatre (notably, confirming *Modern Music's* assumptions). He spoke enthusiastically about America, carefully misrepresenting the nature of *Mahagonny*:

With a comrade, Herr Brecht, I wrote, in 1927, an operetta [...] It was our romantic conception of romantic America. I had never been to America before, but my dreams and illusions about your country were indicated in the operetta. I find I was astonishingly correct. New York, America, is a romantic place, and by that I do not mean sentimental. I have lived in London and my home now is in Paris. Nowhere do I see people that live with such zest, such fullness, as you Americans.⁷³

The reimagining of *Mahagonny* as a romantic operetta is an astounding attempt at public relations on Weill's part. The opera presents a version of an American city which revolves around money, gluttony, lust and drunkenness; where the worst crime is poverty, and a man is put to death for being unable to pay his bills. There were riots at the first performances, as Hans Gutman explained in his *Modern Music* review of the opera:

Unquestionably, the most significant event of the operatic season so far has been the recent work of Brecht and Weill: *The Rise and Decline of the City of Mahagonny*. The premiere in Leipzig ended in a disturbance such as I have never seen surpassed. Objections, which started in the first act, developed later into an open battle, with people roaring, whistling, swearing, clapping and shouting with joy; the evening just escaped closing with a fist fight.⁷⁴

Gutman blamed this on the text: 'it is materialistic, cynical and, beneath everything, profoundly pessimistic.'⁷⁵ The interview with Gilbert ran under the headline, 'German Refugee [*sic*] Discovers Romantic America Lives up to Operetta He Wrote, Sight Unseen in 1927'.

⁷² Douglas Gilbert, 'German Refugee [*sic*] Discovers Romantic America Lives Up to Operetta He Wrote, Sight Unseen in 1927', *New York World Telegram*, 17 October 1935, in <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/german-refugee-discovers-romantic-america>> [accessed 17 April 2009].

⁷³ Gilbert, 'Romantic America'.

⁷⁴ Gutman, 'Opera Season', (p. 33).

⁷⁵ Gutman, 'Opera Season', (p. 33).

Weill discussed *Mahagonny* on several occasions, presenting the piece in different ways depending on his audience. In what appears to be a more detailed conversation about his musical ability and practices in the *New York Times*, also in October 1935, Weill explains the differences between the 1927 *songspiel* and the later opera. He says that in the opera, 'Brecht and I had a moral idea [...] namely, that the city given over to pleasure must perish.'⁷⁶ Weill reframes his previous work with two goals in mind, to appear more personally agreeable to Americans, and to present it as commercially accessible. It is a conscious shaping of his reputation, which he was clearly skilled at; Gilbert praises Weill for his sincerity: 'his English is good, and the quotes aren't phony.'⁷⁷ The reimagining or repurposing of *Mahagonny*, presents an acceptable version of his past, a version of his own history in which all roads lead to the USA. In Weill's perhaps most openly patriotic interview given to a radio series entitled 'I'm an American' in 1941, Weill again recalls his "romantic portrayal" of America:

One of my most successful operas, *The Rise and Fall of the City Mahagonny*, was about an American city. We even wrote two songs in English for this opera. Strangely enough, when I arrived in this country I found that our description of this country was quite accurate in many ways.⁷⁸

Weill uses *Mahagonny*, where and when he thought it pertinent to do so to advance his own reputation.

Another tactic Weill uses is to praise American cultural developments, especially with regards to music:

Nowhere do I see people that live with such zest, such fullness, as you Americans. It is admirably shown in your music, in your cultural expression. I do not see that you borrow ideas any more, but are definitely expressing yourselves. America finally has reached the influential stage in artistic effort and Europe can now learn from her.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ N.S., 'Kurt Weill's New Score'.

⁷⁷ Gilbert, 'Romantic America'.

⁷⁸ 'I'm an American! Interview with Kurt Weill', NBC Blue Network, 9 March 1941. Transcribed from audiocassette held by the WLRC, Ser.122/3 in <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/354-im-an-american>> [accessed 14 October 2009].

⁷⁹ Gilbert, 'Romantic America'.

He also connects himself to these developments – again in reference to *Mahagonny*, and the use of the ‘song’ as opposed to ‘lied’, he explains that song ‘corresponded, I suppose, to the better type of American popular song. And while it consisted of four or five verses and a refrain, it did not conform to a specific number of measures as your popular songs do here.’⁸⁰ Weill positions his own political feelings as quite apart from what he calls ‘those soviet composers [who] had to make their librettos subservient to a definite anti bourgeois program.’⁸¹ Nonetheless, in the same interview he notes that ‘opera can be romantic, emotionally intense and still reflect on certain faults of our social relationships.’⁸²

Weill’s clearest and most detailed attempts at defining his own image in early exile come in the form of two essays, both remarkably similar in tone and ambition. They are in effect a kind of “mission statement”, in which Weill traces the problems in music theatre and how he proposes to set it right. In the 1936 *Stage* article, written to accompany *Johnny Johnson*, Weill argues passionately about his belief in the future of musical theatre. He suggests that music is an ‘inevitable and intrinsic’ feature of drama, and at the origins of theatre the term ‘music theatre’ itself would have been ‘tautological’.⁸³ He proposes that the separation of the hitherto entwined forms began with the establishment of opera, at which point ‘the natural sense of fusion had gone; unfortunate self-consciousness set in’.⁸⁴ Weill argues that since then:

Opera, love-child of the European court, became more and more the property of the music lover. It developed its own style, cultivated its own public, and therewith established an independent life. In this form music is the leading element; ideas of form are far more important than dramatic ideas; the spoken content is pushed farther and farther into

⁸⁰ R.C.B, ‘Kurt Weill Has Secured Niche’.

⁸¹ ‘National Music, Opera and the Movies - An Interview with Kurt Weill’, *Pacific Coast Musician*, XXVI.13 (3 July 1937), pp. 12-13, in <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/352-national-music>> [accessed 10 January 2009].

⁸² ‘National Music, Opera and the Movies’.

⁸³ Kurt Weill, ‘The Alchemy of Music: Music May Be The Ingredient That Will Transmute The Play Into Living Theatre’, *Stage*, 14.2 (November 1936), 63-64, in <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/the-alchemy-of-music>> [accessed 10 January 2009].

⁸⁴ Weill, ‘Alchemy of Music’.

the background (so that today, in this country, operas are performed in foreign languages which almost no one understands).⁸⁵

In contrast, he notes that the development of realism has left theatre, which he says is 'contented with such a direct photographic representation of life that there is no further relation whatever with music.'⁸⁶ He explains:

The more that serious music wanders into esoteric regions where very few can follow, the more is light music despised. It is completely forgotten that, in the time of Mozart, such a distinction scarcely existed and that the light muse has produced such geniuses as Offenbach, Sullivan, and Johann Strauss.⁸⁷

Weill positions himself as outside the imposed divisions between popular and art music. He abandons the cultural hierarchy that he views as falsely attributing a low position for music theatre. He suggests a third way, between 'opera completely isolated from drama' and 'musical comedy, which is to say a handful of topical events [...] surrounding a group of hit songs'.⁸⁸ Instead, he argues: 'the stage has a reason for existence today only if it aspires to a rarer level of truth, only if it restores poetry.'⁸⁹

He then (and without any subtlety) connects this aspiration with his own career so far in Germany and his recent work in the USA, making a direct connection to Paul Green and to his future collaborator, Maxwell Anderson. He closes by suggesting that *Johnny Johnson* had convinced him of Green's talents, in the 'rich musical quality of his speech, in the simple human approach of his theme, in the true folk humour of his characters, and in the beauty of his poetry, all the conditions for the creation of a new musical theatre stand ready.'⁹⁰

The article would perhaps come as a shock to those expecting Weill to conform to Brecht's ideas of the separation of music in drama. Weill argues for the playwright and poet to become 'one person', since music elevates the play

⁸⁵ Weill, 'Alchemy of Music'.

⁸⁶ Weill, 'Alchemy of Music'.

⁸⁷ Weill, 'Alchemy of Music'.

⁸⁸ Weill, 'Alchemy of Music'.

⁸⁹ Weill, 'Alchemy of Music'.

⁹⁰ Weill, 'Alchemy of Music'.

into a 'high level of feeling'.⁹¹ Without music, the poet can only use 'exalted verse-speech' which results in the text moving away from 'everyday truth and language'.⁹² With music:

The author is much better able to remain within the bounds of reality because the music assumes the task of widening and deepening the range of effects, of illuminating the action from within, of making the implications and the universality of the events clear to the spectator. Thus the musical theatre creates a basic extension of the material of drama.⁹³

Far from adhering to any separation of the elements, Weill makes an explicit connection to a Wagnerian ideology of music drama. Note the similarity of language in Wagner's own description of *Gesamtkunstwerk* below, with a parallel emphasis on direct communication:

True drama is only conceivable as proceeding from a common tendency of every art towards the most direct communication with a common public: each separate art, to be fully intelligible, can only communicate with the common public through a mutual interaction with the other arts in drama; for the purpose of each separate branch of art can only be fully attained by the reciprocal agreement and enlightening corporation of all branches of art.⁹⁴

Wagner suggests music should inhabit (and by extension facilitate) the 'fluent and soft, elastic, impressionable ethereal plane' of emotions.⁹⁵ In contrast Weill insists that music can 'illuminate the action from within'.⁹⁶ Weill's theory reads as an extension and interpretation of Wagner's, unconstrained by cultural hierarchies. He directly positions himself within the tradition of high art, and beyond expectations of what might be conceived of as proper or appropriate.

Weill's second major essay in the USA, 'The Future of Opera in America', was published six months later for *Modern Music*. Weill drafted it in German and had it translated – clearly its exact content was of great importance. He lays

⁹¹ Weill, 'Alchemy of Music'.

⁹² Weill, 'Alchemy of Music'.

⁹³ Weill, 'Alchemy of Music'.

⁹⁴ Richard Wagner, 'The Work of Art of the Future (1849)', in *Modern Theories of Drama: A Selection of writings on Drama and Theatre, 1840-1990*, ed. by George W Brandt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 3-11 (p. 5).

⁹⁵ Wagner, (p. 9).

⁹⁶ Weill, 'Alchemy of Music'.

out his beliefs about the development of the genesis of musical theatre. Here though, he addresses commercial theatre. He argues that without the necessity of commercial relevance, opera grew bloated: 'Not having to fight for its life, it grew spoiled, over-refined, exigent, following whims and disregarding general laws.'⁹⁷ He suggests that the 'restraining influence' of commercial endeavour, enabled the composer to know 'for whom he is creating'.⁹⁸ In Weill's opinion, it was of great benefit to the development of art: 'most great works of art were produced as commissions, for a definite purpose and audience, that is, between the millstones of outer compulsion and inner freedom, between "must" and "will".'⁹⁹ These ideas are perhaps the most shocking in the essay, since they are almost blasphemous to *Modern Music's* ideology which relied on ideas of artistic autonomy. Though this is a fictional misrepresentation of the actual activity of any composer and their professional lives, it remains an aspiration and expectation that Weill is actively denying.

Once again, Weill relates his own experience in Germany. He describes the attempt of his contemporaries to 'break into the entertainment industry', in order to 'penetrate into the most diverse fields and groups of audiences'.¹⁰⁰ These developments were interrupted by the rise of Hitler, which left no possibility for their continuation in the 'existing situation'.¹⁰¹ As a result, Weill says he looked to America, though he does note it 'can simply take up this music theatre development right where Europe left off.'¹⁰² He sees a parallel development, 'on a new plane fixed by conditions in this country'.¹⁰³ He proposes a poetic theatre, and is pleased with what he had already found in the USA: 'Everywhere we find a tendency to break away from the realistic scene of the last decade, to find an elevated, poetic level of theatre, which can survive alongside the movies.'¹⁰⁴ Unlike the *Stage* essay, and his many later

⁹⁷ Kurt Weill, 'The Future of Opera in America', *Modern Music*, XIV.4 (May-June 1937), 183-18 in <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/the-future-of-opera-in-america>> [accessed 10 January 2009].

⁹⁸ Weill, 'Future of Opera'.

⁹⁹ Weill, 'Future of Opera'.

¹⁰⁰ Weill, 'Future of Opera'.

¹⁰¹ Weill, 'Future of Opera'.

¹⁰² Weill, 'Future of Opera'.

¹⁰³ Weill, 'Future of Opera'.

¹⁰⁴ Weill, 'Future of Opera'.

interviews, Weill appears Eurocentric in his thinking. There is even a trace of a culturally imperialist sentiment in his concept of the old world's experience (as opposed to American naivety) and in his imagery:

All these signs indicate that the soil is favourable for development. What will grow on it is hard to say, for there is no sort of tradition. The general public, outside of the large cities knows little or nothing about opera, but they tell me that travelling troupes giving Verdi performances have had great success, and I am convinced that the radio, which is an important influence in this country, will do profitable preparatory work.¹⁰⁵

Weill concludes by suggesting a variety of possibilities about where this new music theatre might originate. He proposes that it may well come from Broadway, where 'there are already many starting points for a new kind of musical comedy here, and Gilbert and Sullivan in England, Offenbach in Paris, and Johann Strauss in Vienna have proved that a musical theatre culture of high merit can arise from the field of light music.'¹⁰⁶ Weill also suggests the Federal Theatre or even the medium of the movie as its eventual origin point.¹⁰⁷

In both essays, Weill portrays himself as a vital figure in this transition. To the possible despair of George Antheil and his colleagues, Weill does not suggest that theatre music was a means to an end but rather the very purpose and focus of his work. In fact, in all of his interactions with the press, Weill actively disseminates suitable elements of his history and his theory about theatre, in an attempt to advance his future career. He acts as an intermediary for his own ambitions. This depiction of Weill as a kind of broker becomes especially pertinent in considering his dealings with *Modern Music*. His essay was an attempt to negotiate a relationship between commercial musical theatre and art music. It was written during a period of transition for the journal, a moment 'when it really did seem as though a new American musical theatre was about to be born'.¹⁰⁸ Eric Salzman notes that the magazine was faced with 'Blitzstein, Gershwin, Virgil Thomson, the quickly Americanized Kurt Weill,

¹⁰⁵ Weill, 'Future of Opera'.

¹⁰⁶ Weill, 'Future of Opera'.

¹⁰⁷ Weill, 'Future of Opera'.

¹⁰⁸ Salzman, 'Modern Music', (p. 18).

Copland, and others [...] scoring real theatrical successes.’¹⁰⁹ Salzman identifies that Weill was seen as at the heart of this ‘attempt to create a new popular musical theatre’.¹¹⁰ Weill’s position between two art worlds allowed him to make these proposals. He was able to do this because his reputation facilitated it (i.e. *Modern Music* asked him to write an article because he had *enough* standing to do so); he was therefore able to share his ideas. He actively negotiated and refined his own reputational capital.

CASE STUDY 2 - WEILL’S ECONOMIC ASSETS

Making an accurate picture of Weill’s earnings and outgoings is complicated by the lack of surviving evidence. What does remain can generally be found in letters between Weill and Lenya, though any historian would be foolish to assume that this kind of archival material, (i.e. letters between husband and wife) necessarily offers reliable proof. However, these letters do allow the classification of the types of income that Weill received into three groups. Firstly, Weill received remuneration from publishers - initially with the French publisher Heugel, and then later Chappell in the form of monthly stipends and royalties. Secondly, both *Johnny Johnson* and *The Eternal Road*, his Broadway productions during this period, generated some income, potentially for his work both as a composer and as an orchestrator. (Though Weill himself does not mention any income from the latter activity, other sources suggest that he should have received something, and I will return to this in depth later). Finally, he received sizeable income from his employment in Hollywood. These three income streams were supplemented by the small amounts of paid acting work Lenya carried out (during the run of *The Eternal Road* she appears to have been paid \$150 per week, a not inconsiderable sum for 1937).¹¹¹ In each of these cases very little corroborating paperwork has survived, so it is rarely possible to connect Weill’s references to other sources. However what does exist can be used to examine Weill’s broader

¹⁰⁹ Salzman, ‘*Modern Music*’, (p. 18).

¹¹⁰ Salzman, ‘*Modern Music*’, (p. 18).

¹¹¹ Kurt Weill, ‘161. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [13 February 1937]’, in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 206-08 (p. 207).

circumstances, to facilitate a clearer understanding of his economic assets in early exile.

INCOME FROM PUBLISHERS

Heugel continued to pay Weill his regular stipend of 4000 francs a month after his arrival in the USA, payments which presumably continued until the end of their contract in March 1936. In 1935, Weill would have been able to convert this into around \$264, (not including any charges) which would translate to an annual salary of \$3,168.¹¹² There are several ways of understanding the value of this figure; if it is placed within the context of the nominal GDP per capita, (that is to say the 'average' per person output of the economy in the prices of 1935 and in 2008) it equates to what would be a contemporary annual salary of around \$261,000.¹¹³ This clarifies Weill's comparatively healthy financial position in early exile; however, it would seem that he had considerable expenses, as he was staying at the St. Moritz.

For their first six months in New York, Weill and Lenya lived at this glamorous location on Central Park, which had rates to match. An advert placed in the *Jewish Forum* in 1935 records the cheapest double room rate at the St Moritz as \$5, with suites starting at \$8 (using the same measure of inflation as before, the 2008 rates of these suites would be around \$650 a night).¹¹⁴ Though it is not known what kind of room they shared, even if the figure is an average of say a \$7 double room, Weill and Lenya were still facing hotel bills

¹¹² The conversion date currently only goes back to 2008. The average price of one US dollar in 1935 was 15.1490 Old francs – taken from Lawrence H. Officer, 'Exchange Rates Between the United States Dollar and Forty-one Currencies', *MeasuringWorth*, 2009
<<http://www.measuringworth.org/exchangeglobal/>> [accessed 1 September 2009].

¹¹³ The nominal GDP *per capita* was used as it is particularly useful in considering both how affordable an amount would be to an average person, and for wages, how an amount ranked in status compared to what others earned. This and the following inflation data is taken from: Samuel H. Williamson, 'Six Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1790 to Present', *MeasuringWorth*, 2009
<<http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/>> [accessed 1 September 2009].

¹¹⁴ '[Advert] St. Moritz On-The-Park, 50 Central Park South', *The Jewish Forum*, 18 (1935), 236 (p. 236).

of \$217 against the Heugel income of around \$264 per month. At this point, it is not clear whether Weill was receiving any payment from the production company behind *The Eternal Road*. On balance, it would seem likely that he might have been able to receive money in an emergency from them, since they had brought him and his wife to the USA. It may be possible that the production company had been paying a percentage of Weill's hotel bill, or indeed the entire amount, which would have left him in a slightly healthier position. In any case, the *Eternal Road* production company was forced to seek bankruptcy in January 1936. Either due to Weill's poor cash flow or the sudden need to pay their own hotel bills, Weill and Lenya moved to a less expensive hotel, the Park Crescent at 150 Riverside Drive.¹¹⁵ For the sake of comparison, a 1939 Federal Writers' Project guidebook to New York (the best obtainable source) lists city hotels by the price of a single room 'with private bath'; here the St Moritz is listed as \$3.50 while the Park Crescent's rate is \$2.50, slightly less than a third cheaper.¹¹⁶ If it is assumed that the Park Crescent might have offered a similar relative rate in 1936, then the move would have saved them a substantial portion of their outgoings. Since Heugel ended their contract with Weill only a month after this, it was a timely reduction in expenditure, and the surviving correspondence does not seem to indicate any shock at the new arrangement.

The relationship between Weill and Heugel had started in Paris during the collapse of his previous contract with his publishers in Germany, Universal Edition. They had ended their association with Weill during October and November 1933, soon after his exile. Universal recognised that selling the works of such a contentious political figure would no longer be viable (and would soon be legally prohibited).¹¹⁷ The contract between Weill and Heugel continued in the first months of exile. It would appear that after receiving notification of Heugel's intent to withdraw their contract in June 1936, Weill wrote this rather subdued reply. Given his usual vociferous tone in

¹¹⁵ Farneth, Juchem and Stein, p. 148.

¹¹⁶ Federal Writers' Project, *New York City: Vol 1, New York City*, American Guide Series (New York: Federal Writers' Publications, Inc, 1939), 9-10, at <<http://books.google.co.uk>> [accessed 1 September 2009].

¹¹⁷ Kim Kowalke, 'Kurt Weill, Modernism, and Popular Culture: Öffentlichkeit als Stil', *Modernism / modernity*, 2.1 (1995), 27-69 (p. 33).

correspondence with his publishers, it appears to be a noticeable attempt to keep his options open:

Right now I am trying to create a place for myself in American theatrical life. That will be very difficult, and I will need all of my patience and all of my energy. Once I have found my place over here, I will be able to return to the kind of work which corresponds to my talents and ambition, and that would be the time to offer you operatic works of international calibre, which, I am sure, would be of interest to you.¹¹⁸

Nonetheless, this left Weill without a publisher at a time when he seems to have been devoid of any other income. He apparently continued in this situation until November 1936, when shortly before the opening of *Johnny Johnson*, Weill signed with Chappell. Sadly, there is no record of their contract, and it is unclear how the relationship came about, as no correspondence survives in either the WLRC or the Chappell archives.

Chappell was the 'leading publisher of show music' at the time, holding a near monopoly on Broadway publishing.¹¹⁹ Steven Suskin notes, 'in 1933, 1934, and 1935, and 1936 combined, with Broadway production at its lowest level ever, Harms/Chappell published 43 musicals to only 8 from other publishers.'¹²⁰ It represented most major Broadway composers, including George Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter and Richard Rodgers.¹²¹ Chappell in New York was managed by Max Dreyfus, who had brought his experience with the Tin Pan Alley publisher, Harms, (and many of its clients) to the position. Weill's reputation and the financial success in Europe of *Dreigroschenoper*, seems to have mitigated any risk on Chappell's part.

Though the terms of this contract are unclear, Weill's correspondence in the early months of 1937 would imply he was receiving some kind of retainer, presumably taken against future royalties. From Hollywood in January 1937,

¹¹⁸ Kurt Weill, 'Weill (in New York) to Heugel, 4 June 1936', in *Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents*, ed. by David Farneth, Elmar Juchem and Dave Stein (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), p. 164.

¹¹⁹ W.H. Husk, 'Chappell' in Grove Music Online (Oxford Music Online, 2009) <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/05438>> [accessed 1 September 2009].

¹²⁰ Steven Suskin, *The Sound of Broadway Music: A Book of Orchestrators and Orchestrations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.23.

¹²¹ Husk, 'Chappell'.

Weill wrote reminding Lenya, 'you can't get impatient here, that's the main thing, I'm not losing anything, since I can arrange for Chappell to keep paying.'¹²² The amount is mentioned a month later, when Weill notes he has received 'the \$750 from Chappell'.¹²³ He makes a subsequent reference to it in April, which suggests the payment's apparent regularity, 'Chappell keeps on paying me (they've just sent a check)'.¹²⁴ He makes a final mention to it in June, at which point he was working on Fritz Lang's film *You and Me*, noting that although he received another \$750, 'they had to give me a leave of absence for the film'.¹²⁵ It is quite plausible then that Weill received this payment monthly, and there is no reason not to believe that this started at the point of signing with Chappell in November 1936 until the Lang film in June 1937. (If this is examined by referring back to the nominal GDP as before, and converting it into an annual salary, it equates to an amount in 2008 money in the region of \$600,000.) Though there are only Weill's casual remarks to go on, he appears to have been in receipt of a large sum of money from his publishers on the basis of his previous reputation and the expectation of future financial success.

During Weill's early exile, Chappell published two collections of his music to accompany Broadway openings. For *Johnny Johnson*, the publisher commissioned new lyrics for the title song in an attempt to convert it into a commercial property. This does not seem to have translated into sales. In this letter to Max Dreyfus, Weill struggles to understand this failure in the context of what he viewed to be *Johnny Johnson's* popularity:

¹²² Kurt Weill, '153. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [28 January 1937]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 197-198 (p. 197).

¹²³ Weill, '161. [13 February 1937]', (p. 207).

¹²⁴ Kurt Weill, '179. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [7 April 1937]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 229-230 (p. 229).

¹²⁵ Kurt Weill, '191. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [5 June 1937]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 244-245 (p. 245).

I cannot quite understand the way things are going with my music for *Johnny Johnson*. Maybe it is the difference between [the] American and European music business which makes the whole thing so difficult to understand for me, and I'll be glad if you could explain it to me.¹²⁶

Weill expressed his concern that this new music had not been widely circulated, and even worse, 'a young band leader, whom I know, called up Chappell on Friday asked for the *Johnny Johnson* music. He got the answer: "We are not pushing the show, but we have a couple of other hits, why don't you play those?"'¹²⁷ Whether in spite or because of Weill's protestations, although Heugel maintained their rights over *The Eternal Road*, Chappell was able to secure a license from them (or their American agents) to publish a small collection of Weill's music after the piece finally opened in January 1937.¹²⁸

Weill's confusion and anger at Chappell's salesmanship highlights both his naivety and unfamiliarity with the particular rules of the industry he is attempting to enter. What is perhaps surprising is that though neither *Johnny Johnson* nor *The Eternal Road* was especially profitable, Weill continued to be paid such a significant sum by his publishers. His established reputation (not discounting Chappell's need for a monopoly on Broadway) was translated into financial capital, acting as a kind of security against the gamble on the part of his publisher.

INCOME FROM STAGE WORK

JOHNNY JOHNSON AND THE ETERNAL ROAD

Though there is little information regarding exactly what income Weill received from his theatrical productions during this period, there are enough key references to give a suggestion. Shortly after the suspension of his contract

¹²⁶ Kurt Weill 'Weill (in New York) to Max Dreyfus of Chappell Music, 20 December 1936' quoted in *Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents*, ed. by David Farneth, Elmar Juchem and Dave Stein (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), p. 169.

¹²⁷ Weill 'Weill (in New York) to Max Dreyfus of Chappell Music', in *Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents*, ed. by David Farneth, Elmar Juchem and Dave Stein (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), p. 169.

¹²⁸ See fig. 402. 'After the premiere' in *Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents*, ed. by David Farneth, Elmar Juchem and Dave Stein (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), p. 174 (p. 174).

with Heugel, Weill met Cheryl Crawford, one of the Group Theatre's three directors. This meeting eventually led to *Johnny Johnson*, a project which I will discuss in full in the next chapter. The production was not financially successful; the Group had been beset by difficulties in funding the project and the production closed after 88 performances.¹²⁹ It would seem unlikely that Weill received anything sizeable in royalties, but in June 1937, sometime after the production closed, he wrote the following to Lenya, 'I'll still get a few hundred dollars from *Johnny Johnson*.'¹³⁰ Again, this was no small amount, and implies that he may have even received other income while the production was running.

On 7 January 1937, during the run of *Johnny Johnson* and a year behind schedule, *The Eternal Road* opened. Weill would later denounce it as 'a self-inflicted financial disaster' on the part of producer Meyer Weisgal.¹³¹ The colossal production had indeed been doomed from the start, since even if it had played to full capacity houses it could only ever make a loss, as Weisgal recalled in his biography:

Full houses from nine performances a week brought in \$24,000. The weekly payroll came to \$31,000. This meant raising another \$7,000 a week just to keep the show going, without mentioning such a trifling matter as profit.¹³²

A week after the opening, Weill wrote to his brother and sister-in-law informing them that 'the success of the play is really extraordinary, only the box office so far is not what we expected after those reviews, and the show's weekly running expenses are outrageous. But we hope it will pull through -- even financially.'¹³³ A document prepared by accountant John Pinto suggests

¹²⁹ For further details see Wendy Smith, *Real-Life Drama: The Group Theatre and America, 1931-1940* (New York: Knopf, 1990), pp. 268-272.

¹³⁰ Weill, '191. [5 June 1937]', (p. 244).

¹³¹ Kurt Weill, '175. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [28 March 1937]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 224-225 (p. 224).

¹³² Meyer Weisgal, *Meyer Weisgal ... So Far: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 137.

¹³³ Kurt Weill, 'Weill (in New York) to Hans and Rita Weill, 15 January 1937', in *Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents*, ed. by Dave Stein, Elmar Juchem and David Farneth (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), p. 175 (p. 175).

that by 13 February 1937, Weill had earned \$3,474.71 in royalties.¹³⁴ However, it is not clear whether Weill had actually been paid this money, his letter to Lenya of the same day would suggest not. He informed her that the weekly box office takings have apparently dropped from \$29,000 to \$22,000, but Louis Nizer, one of the producers, 'thinks it could still become a success. Of course he wants to cut the royalties (which they don't pay anyway).'¹³⁵ Weill was extremely angry at what he viewed as financial negligence:

In my opinion the whole thing will collapse within a short time, unless new funds are invested and the weekly expenses cut drastically - then the show might have a chance to run until spring. The whole thing is deeply disgusting. Reinhardt keeps behaving like a big flaming asshole. He is furious because he isn't getting any money, but of course he won't lift a finger.¹³⁶

When the production finally faced closure, Weill's disappointment focused on his social status as opposed to any loss of finances. He wrote to Lenya discussing the possibility of joining Max Reinhardt's lawsuit against the producers, in an attempt to recover income: 'Well, to us it's all the same, although it would have been nicer, of course, to have a long run on Broadway, not for the money but for the prestige.'¹³⁷

ORCHESTRATION

Weill composed all the tunes; composed all the incidental material normally supplied by arrangers and orchestrators, including underscoring, scene changes, and ballets; was entirely his own vocal arranger (another function almost always farmed out [...]); orchestrated virtually everything himself; and single-handedly re-orchestrated every transposition necessitated by rehearsal changes.

¹³⁴ John C. Pinto, 'Figure 406. 'Eternal Road - royalties earned as at February 13, 1937'', in *Kurt Weill: A Life in Pictures and Documents*, ed. by Dave Stein, Elmar Juchem and David Farneth (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), p. 176 (p. 176).

¹³⁵ Weill, '161. [13 February 1937]', (p. 206).

¹³⁶ Weill, '161. [13 February 1937]', (p. 206).

¹³⁷ Kurt Weill, '169. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [13 March 1937]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 216-217 (p. 216).

[...] Nobody else has done all that for fourteen straight years and eight musicals on Broadway.¹³⁸

Of all the income streams I have examined so far, none have been so underrepresented in the literature as the possibility that Weill was paid for orchestrating his own music. The idea that Weill's remarkable decision to carry out this task might have been in part due to the fact he would be paid for it, was raised in Steven Suskin's 2009 book, *The Sound of Broadway Music*.¹³⁹ Suskin reveals the normally hidden work of Broadway orchestrators, whose labour is seldom featured in the musical's dominant historical narrative. It may be useful to briefly clarify what the composer, arranger and orchestrator actually do; Suskin helpfully suggests 'the song is what they sing. The arrangement is how they sing it. The orchestration is how it sounds.'¹⁴⁰ Suskin explores both the individual orchestrators themselves and the industry they worked within, a method of production which was developed and maintained by music publishers.

The explanation for Weill's choice to orchestrate his music has tended to run along the lines of the need for artistic control rather than payment; Weill's inherent need for control over his own music demanded that he personally carry out the work. David Drew explained it by noting that Weill had orchestrated his own music in Germany (though under altered conditions, since there the preparation of orchestrations had 'generally overlapped with the planning and first sketching of the next work').¹⁴¹ Drew put Weill's continuation of this practice in the USA, where 'the rhythm and tempo [of Broadway] precluded any overlapping', down to the composer's 'professional pride and his instinctive awareness that only through the orchestral score could he fully articulate the individuality and the expressive nuances latent in

¹³⁸ Mark N. Grant, 'Review: "The Sound of Broadway Music: A Book of Orchestrators and Orchestrations"', *Kurt Weill Newsletter*, 27.2 (Fall 2009), 14-15 (p. 15).

¹³⁹ Suskin, p. 32.

¹⁴⁰ Suskin, p. 4.

¹⁴¹ David Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (University of California Press, 1987), p. 84.

the bare outlines of his voice-and-piano drafts.¹⁴² For Drew, Weill's decision to orchestrate his own work is a further mark of his artistic integrity.

It is worth emphasising how unusual it was for a Broadway composer to orchestrate their own score. The tasks of orchestration and arrangement were normally carried out by specialists; during the 1930s and 1940s, this took place through an industry dominated by publisher Max Dreyfus. His virtual monopoly over Broadway composers and the rights to publishing their music was matched by a cartel-like employment system. The most desired orchestrators were almost exclusively employed by Dreyfus (e.g. Ted Royal, Russell Bennett and Don Walker). The process went as follows, as Suskin explains: 'If a producer wanted to hire any of Max's songwriters, he had to give the publication rights to Dreyfus.'¹⁴³ Whatever music the songwriter wrote would in turn be orchestrated by Dreyfus's team; the cost of this would be (according to Suskin) loaned to the producers in full or delivered for a substantially cut down price: 'to be paid after the show was open and safely running.'¹⁴⁴ Dreyfus as publisher received 50% of the future sheet music sales of the material, and a subsequent 50% of mechanical rights; the upfront cost of orchestration was an investment which could reap significant financial rewards.¹⁴⁵

Even without Dreyfus's system, if a composer had wanted to carry out the orchestration or vocal arrangements themselves, the requirements for either task were prohibitive. Each demanded countless hours to complete, then subsequent changes were necessary in response to what happened in rehearsals (for example, if a song was to be cut, transposed, extended, or a new verse inserted). During the highly pressurised rehearsal period, the composer had little time to give to rewriting and reworking orchestral parts in response to any alterations. In a 1949 interview, Weill spoke about the process (with interjections from Lenya):

¹⁴² Drew, *Handbook*, pp. 84-85.

¹⁴³ Suskin, p. 16.

¹⁴⁴ Suskin, p. 17.

¹⁴⁵ Suskin, p. 20.

“It is the orchestration I worry about”, said Weill, who is one of the few theatrical composers who does his own orchestrating. “I cannot do it before rehearsals begin because I have to hear the singers’ voices and also work with the choreographer. It means I am at rehearsal all day long and must work on the orchestration at night. I get no sleep...” [ellipsis in original]

“Don’t feel sorry for him”, his wife admonished. “He loves every minute of it. After opening night he always says, ‘Now I am going to have a good rest.’ The rest lasts exactly two days. Then he says, ‘NOW what am I going to do?’”¹⁴⁶

If the time constraints were not discouragement enough, few composers had the necessary technical ability, as both orchestration and arrangements require skill to complete. Composers may also have been discouraged by the particular collaborative nature of the musical, where there was no need for one person to take on all of these varied roles. Suskin further emphasises the enormous difficulties in an era before composing software and laser printers: ‘As deadlines loom, [it] becomes a cramped and lonely work-through-the-night occupation; sixteen-hour days (and more) are the norm. In the three-week period during which much of the orchestration is done, the composer’s time and energy are more properly concentrated on rehearsals.’¹⁴⁷ There is an implication that carrying out the task of orchestration might remove the composer from the creative decision making process, and the active collaboration taking place in the rehearsal room. The suggestion then is that orchestration is something that happens away from the creative work, and it is even implied that it might be inappropriate for a composer because it could distract them from what they should be doing.

As I have already suggested, (and now seems hardly surprising), the orchestrator received little in the way of artistic credit on completion of such arduous work. It is possible that the aversion to obvious labour within the genius/creator ideology and the gruelling task of orchestration have encouraged this suppression. (This discomfort with labour is something I have already examined at length in the Introduction and in Chapter 1.) The main

¹⁴⁶ Mary Braggiotti, ‘Out of Trouble’, *New York Post Week-End Magazine*, 18 September 1949, at

<<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/component/content/article/33-writings/362-out-of-trouble>> [accessed 7 January 2010].

¹⁴⁷ Suskin, p. 32.

reason for this invisibility is that their work has been placed at the fringes of what has traditionally been accepted as creative; the composer's original concept is historically privileged as more valuable than its subsequent orchestration. 'Some Enchanted Evening' is known as a Richard Rodgers tune, not as a Robert Russell Bennett orchestration, or a Rodgers-Bennett collaboration. The value placed on inspiration (as evidence of artistic genius and proof of ownership), over and above practical skill and craft, negated the importance of the orchestrator. In regards to 1930s and 1940s musicals, the rights to the orchestrator's work (recalling Raymond Williams's 'post artisan' figure) were sold, either to the producer or the publisher. Even Suskin opens his book with the following question: 'Theatre orchestration is the art of - well, is it a creative art? Or is it the work of skilled craftspeople? This question shall be addressed again and again over the course of the book.'¹⁴⁸ I would ask why this distinction needs to be made at all.

The only thing going for the job seems to have been the money. Robert Russell Bennett wrote an article for *Modern Music* explaining what was involved, and what had attracted him to the profession:

Coming to New York [...] a period of copying the parts from musical comedy scores gave me the first urge to do the scoring, followed by a much greater urge when I learned how much they were paid per page for the work.¹⁴⁹

The cost of orchestration was one of the major outlays any producer faced in putting on a musical:

Orchestrations have always been relatively expensive. The thousands of dollars spent on scenery and costumes make a certain amount of sense, as you can physically see what the dollars are buying. Orchestration dollars, though, are invisible: the physical result is merely hundreds of pages of tattered paper. And the orchestration is only half the story: the copyists, collectively, usually earn an amount between 60% and 100% of the orchestrator. Copyists are paid by the line: each page of orchestral score might contain parts for twenty-five players. This comes to a considerable sum, compounded when new

¹⁴⁸ Suskin, p. 3.

¹⁴⁹ Robert Russell Bennett, 'Orchestrating for Broadway', *Modern Music*, IX (1932), 148-52 (p. 149).

songs are added overnight during the tryout with everyone getting double-time at out-of-town rates.¹⁵⁰

It was a significant part of the budget for any Broadway show. Suskin uses the example of the 1931 musical *Everybody's Welcome*, which had a total orchestration cost of \$3,000.¹⁵¹ (Using the same method of financial conversion as before, this is a figure in 2008 values of around \$230,000.¹⁵²) Suskin makes the argument that Weill's decision to take on the enormous task of orchestration in his early exile could be due to the possibility that Weill 'apparently needed the not inconsequential orchestrator fees'.¹⁵³ Mark Grant's review of Suskin's book concurs: 'one wonders if part of the reason may have been financial: the orchestrator's fee may have functioned as a kind of salary for Weill while he was preparing a show.'¹⁵⁴

Any surprise that Weill might have had a financial motivation for taking on orchestration is further evidence of the widespread ignorance of the financial and administrative aspects of his career. The fact that within commercial Broadway methods of production, professionals were paid for their labour seems to be so obvious as to hardly warrant comment. There is a useful illustration in Weill's last letters to Lenya before they left for the USA, in a discussion of the fees he could expect to receive for *The Eternal Road*. Weill notes: '[the producer will] pay me \$100 per week, then \$200 when rehearsals start and – if I agree to do the conducting myself – \$250 while the show runs. That's very decent.'¹⁵⁵ Weill seems comfortable discussing financial remuneration, yet money is unmentioned by David Drew (perhaps predictably) and seems to come as a surprise to Mark Grant who is, after all, writing in the *Kurt Weill Newsletter*. Only Suskin assumes that Weill would have been paid.

¹⁵⁰ Suskin, p. 17.

¹⁵¹ Suskin, p. 21.

¹⁵² Williamson, 'Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount'.

¹⁵³ Suskin, p. 32.

¹⁵⁴ Grant, p. 15.

¹⁵⁵ Kurt Weill, '148. Weill in Salzburg to Lenya in London [26 August 1935]', *Speak Low (when you speak love): the letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. by Lys Symonette and Kim Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 189-190 (pp. 189-190).

Suskin raises another possibility, though once again with financial consequences attached. When consulting the Gershwin archives, Suskin found invoices and remittances in which Gershwin reimbursed Harms (Dreyfus's earlier company) for the orchestration, copyist parts, piano arrangements, and even the paper the orchestrations were written on, for several musicals in the 1920s.¹⁵⁶ Though this may only have been the norm during contemporaneous contracts, it does raise the possibility that Weill, as a client of Dreyfus, might have been personally charged for orchestration had he not have done it himself. Suskin believes 'it is to be assumed that Dreyfus sent similar charges to all his composers' (though presumably he means specifically during the 1920s).¹⁵⁷ It is possible that Weill chose to orchestrate his own work not simply to increase his income, but also to avoid incurring additional outgoings in paying for someone else to do it. The lack of further exploration of this suggestion in Suskin's work is problematic, as it raises such radically different possibilities – who exactly is paying for the costs of orchestration: the producers and/or the composers? Whatever the answer, even in this latter case, Weill's decision to orchestrate his own work would still have been made with the financial consideration of not actively losing money.

I will now consider the little evidence that does exist around Weill's orchestrations, and examine their financial repercussions. On several occasions Weill made general statements about his orchestration work. In a short letter to Alan C. Collins (presumably the same Alan Collins as Ogden Nash's literary agent) Weill insists that:

As far as the orchestration is concerned, you must have misunderstood what I said. I have done my own orchestrations in all the shows I have ever been connected with (including *Lady in the Dark*). I consider this a part of the composer's job on a show, and I have always made my financial arrangements accordingly.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Suskin, p. 21.

¹⁵⁷ Suskin, p. 21.

¹⁵⁸ New Haven, Yale University Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, TS with MS additions, *Letter to Alan C Collins, 347 Madison Ave., New York, NY, November 17, 1942*, MSS No. 30, Series number 4.A, Box 47.3 fol. C-E.

Regrettably, no other material remains from this correspondence. It would appear impossible to be sure what Weill means by the 'financial arrangements' he speaks about.

In the case of *Johnny Johnson*, it is clear that Weill's financial position in the summer of 1937 was precarious. He had been effectively unemployed since the end of the Heugel contract, and though Weill may have needed the money, Cheryl Crawford records in her biography that the budget for *Johnny* was small, and that 'fortunately, Kurt did his own orchestrations, which saved money.'¹⁵⁹ Since Weill had orchestrated his own work in Germany, this could well have seemed perfectly reasonable to him. One can only imagine that having signed with Chappell, however, he would have been quickly informed about how orchestration was normally done on Broadway. Though both *Johnny* and *Eternal Road* were produced outside the usual conditions of Broadway production, Weill took their commercial exploitation extremely seriously, as I have already discussed. Putting Weill's prejudices to one side, it seems likely that Chappell did not expect to make any money from *Johnny*, hence the lack of aggressive marketing. It may be possible that this decision to go against expected Broadway behaviour was just one of many in the production of *Johnny Johnson* (as I will show in the next chapter). The clearest surviving information relates to *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *Street Scene*, and *Lost in the Stars* because of the Playwrights Producing Company's diligence in archiving. The Playwrights Producing Company was founded in 1938 by Maxwell Anderson, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, Elmer Rice, and Robert E. Sherwood. In 1946, they accepted Weill as a full member, perhaps in readiness for the production of *Street Scene*, having already produced *Knickerbocker Holiday* in 1938. (Weill did take on orchestration help for this production, in the form of assistant Irving Schlein. After *Johnny Johnson* one can only assume he better understood what he was letting himself in for.¹⁶⁰)

The most valuable document that relates to *Knickerbocker Holiday* is a publishing deal between Max Dreyfus (under the Crawford publishing label) and the Playwrights Producing Company. The contract details the licensing of

¹⁵⁹ Crawford, p. 94.

¹⁶⁰ Drew, *Handbook*, p. 307.

the production to the publisher, and the total rights that they enjoyed over the work:

It is agreed that you will not allow or permit to be rendered or performed in the play at any performance thereof any musical number whatsoever (regular, interpolated or otherwise) unless the publication, mechanical and electrical reproducing and small performing rights thereof are first vested in us.¹⁶¹

There is no mention of the kind of orchestration bargain one might expect on the basis of Suskin's explanation of the standard deal. There is such detailed information about the way in which copying would be paid for that presumably Dreyfus had nothing to do with the orchestration, or had an arrangement directly with Weill:

We agree to furnish all necessary copies of the piano music for the play at our own expense. We also agree to pay for the first \$500 of the cost of extraction of the orchestra parts for the play, it being agreed that the balance of the cost of extraction, but not exceeding \$750, shall be paid for by you; and that if the total cost of extraction shall exceed \$1,250, any such excess shall be paid for by us. All sums paid for by us toward the cost of extraction shall be deemed an advance against royalties.¹⁶²

The contracts for *Street Scene* and *Lost in the Stars* give a clearer picture, but they come from the end of Weill's career when his financial considerations were not so pressing. For *Street Scene*, the contract between all the collaborators and the Playwrights Producing Company does mention orchestration:

H. Kurt Weill agrees to furnish all musical arrangements and orchestrations. If, after commencement of rehearsals, for any reason, Weill should need assistance in preparing new arrangement and orchestrations and/or in making changes to arrangements and orchestration which have theretofore been prepared, the manager agrees to pay for such assistance.

¹⁶¹ Wisconsin, State Historical Society of Wisconsin (SHSW) Archives, Playwrights Company Papers, TS *Contract between Playwrights Producing Company and Crawford Music Corporation (signed by Max Dreyfus) August 1938*, fol. 6/3.

¹⁶² *Contract August 1938*.

I. The manager agrees to pay for extracting and copying the orchestra parts of one complete score.¹⁶³

Here there is specific reference to the fact that Weill is *not* being paid for orchestration, but that he has secured financial protection should he need assistance. The contract goes on to specify that the manager will pay for the extraction and copying of the orchestra parts, in a similar fashion to the *Knickerbocker Holiday* example, and that the manager would pay for a complete copy of the orchestral score should the play run for longer than three months.

The second contract, for *Lost in the Stars*, is particularly revealing. It is a standard Dramatists Guild contract, with typed inserts. These inserts include specific details about credit for orchestration:

Section 10.C Kurt Weill shall also receive credit, where appropriate, for the composition of the musical arrangements and orchestration, which credit will appear on a separate line, below the credit set forth above, but before the credit for members of the cast, are potentially as follows:

“musical arrangements and orchestrations by Kurt Weill”.¹⁶⁴

Once again, Weill seems to be waiving any rights for payment:

Section 10. E Kurt Weill agrees to provide musical arrangements and to orchestrate the score at his own expense, but in the event he requires assistance the manager agrees to pay for same. The manager agrees to pay the cost of extracting all parts, transposing and, in the event the Play runs for three months, the manager will pay the cost of copying the orchestra score. All original manuscripts shall belong to the composer, Kurt Weill.¹⁶⁵

This could indicate that composers were supposed to pay for the costs of orchestrations themselves, corroborating the documents Suskin found in the Gershwin archive. It is, however, too specific to Weill to draw any general conclusion.

¹⁶³ SHSW, Playwrights Company Papers, TS *Street Scene*, rights, *Contract for Street Scene between Elmer Rice, Kurt Weill, Langston Hughes, and the Playwright Producing Company*, p. 5B, fol. 6/14.

¹⁶⁴ SHSW, Playwrights Company Papers, TS *Dramatico - Musical Production Contract*, 26 July 1949, between Playwright Producing Company and Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill.

¹⁶⁵ *Contract*, 26 July 1949.

Outside of these typed inserts, the standard contract reveals how the orchestration cost would normally have been paid for. This standardised section reveals that composers had to pay some of the costs of orchestration (in this case, 25%):

Section 3.e The manager shall deduct from the royalties of the composer and lyricist (but not from advances) the aggregate sum of One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) each week, until a sum equal to fifty percent (50%) of the manager's actual expenditure or the orchestra scores, conductor's score, orchestra parts and vocal parts shall have been recovered by him. The deduction from royalties so made, unless otherwise agreed upon, shall be divided between the Composer and Lyricist according to their respective percentages of royalties. Provided, however, that the manager shall pay to the composer and lyricist of monies received by them to the extent of fifty percent (50%) of the actual expenditures, or at the manager's option he shall deduct from the first royalties that after payable to the composer and lyricist (pro rated according to their respective percentages of royalties) an amount equal to the aggregate one hundred dollars (\$100.00) payments may keep them prior to his having presented them with evidence of the said expenditure.¹⁶⁶

This usual method of production was superseded by Weill's addition to the contract, that he would orchestrate the score 'at his own expense'. The evidence points to Weill working for free, so perhaps David Drew was right. The existence of the standard provision suggests that there may be a more complex answer, although Weill's open delight in the work of orchestration does indeed signify the kind of professional pride and control that Drew proposed after all. In his letter to Collins, Weill emphasised that he thought it 'part of the composer's job'.¹⁶⁷ However, the clauses that relate to the reduction in composer's royalties for orchestration costs highlight the likelihood of some financial calculation on Weill's part. He may have preferred to receive a full royalty, and indeed felt he would earn more money by choosing not to receive upfront wages for his orchestration work. There may also have been accounting or tax considerations that privileged certain kinds of incomes.

Clearly, a separate detailed survey into the kinds of contracts issued to composers and orchestrators in the 1930s would be very useful. Whatever the

¹⁶⁶ *Contract, 26 July 1949* (supplementary provisions article).

¹⁶⁷ *Letter to Alan C Collins*.

calculation for Weill (and it is not entirely certain even with this substantial new evidence), I want to acknowledge that some kind of calculation must have been made. It is vital to understand that Weill's career in the USA was a series of negotiations between artistic and financial pressures.

INCOME FROM HOLLYWOOD

In January 1937, George Antheil wrote a guide for those readers of *Modern Music* who were considering a career move to Hollywood. It is a particularly helpful document for understanding contemporary conditions for composers in the film industry. Antheil advised that 'with aptitude one can be busy earning \$3,000 - \$8,000 a picture.'¹⁶⁸ Antheil acknowledges the dangers of moving there:

Choosing to be lazy, or to do other work, one can write film scores one or two months a year and still live extremely well. Or, on the other hand, one can work furiously for several years, and live in ease for the rest of one's life - that is if one doesn't buy a house in the typical Hollywood manner and develop a sudden need for three motorcars and two butlers.¹⁶⁹

Finally, he advised that 'before coming to Hollywood, the composer should decide how much he is worth, and then he must hold out against all persuasion until he is paid that amount. For, as I said before, Hollywood is a peculiar city, [...] as hard as a diamond.'¹⁷⁰

Weill went to Hollywood in January 1937 with a film job in hand. The film was being written by Clifford Odets (who had written for the Group Theatre) as an adaptation of the Ilya Erenburg novel *The Loves of Jeanne Ney*. It started under the working title of *Castles in Spain* and eventually became *The River Is Blue*. It was produced by Walter Wanger, who had hired Louis Milestone to direct it. (Milestone is now best known for directing the 1930 film *All Quiet on the Western Front*.) Weill found the Hollywood working environment difficult, but in his letters to Lenya seemed focused on his purpose in remaining: 'There's only one way to get on here: you have to take everything with a great

¹⁶⁸ George Antheil, 'Breaking into the Movies', *Modern Music*, XIV.2 (January-February 1937), 82-86 (p. 85).

¹⁶⁹ Antheil, 'Movies', (p. 85).

¹⁷⁰ Antheil, 'Movies', (p. 85).

sense of humour and make fun of it (to yourself, because you mustn't show it!), and just enjoy the beautiful scenery and make money.'¹⁷¹ In letters from this period, Weill documents his careful attitude towards spending money. He struggled to find somewhere to live that would suit his requirements: 'I want to wait a while until I find something [...] beautiful and inexpensive, because that would allow me to save a lot of money and at the same time be far away from the general scene.'¹⁷² He wrote at length about his attempts to find a car, which he clearly felt he could not do without in Hollywood. He bought a 1934 Oldsmobile, telling Lenya that he 'only paid \$200 down and then it'll cost \$30 a month, including insurance and taxes'.¹⁷³ This frugality does not seem to be warranted by the circumstances he found himself in, since he was paid \$7,500 for his work on the film, in instalments of \$1,250 for every week spent on the project.¹⁷⁴ It is worth noting that Weill was presumably receiving his Chappell's stipend of \$750 per month during this period.

The film itself was scuppered by the falling out between Wanger and Milestone, and it was never made in its intended form. This did not affect Weill financially, who was only 'contractually obliged to complete the score'.¹⁷⁵ Weill explained his position to Lenya, noting that he had heard the news of the cancellation:

You can imagine how upsetting this was - but not for this little smarty. I get all the money as soon as I deliver the music. Therefore, tomorrow I'll begin working at the music, scene by scene. I hope to have everything ready by 1 April. That will be advantageous for me,

¹⁷¹ Kurt Weill, '154. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [30 January 1937]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 198-199 (p. 198).

¹⁷² Kurt Weill, '157. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [2 February 1937]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 201-202 (p. 201).

¹⁷³ Kurt Weill, '158. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [4 February 1937]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 202-203 (p. 202).

¹⁷⁴ For details on the instalments see Weill, '169. [13 March 1937]', (p. 217).

¹⁷⁵ Drew, *Handbook*, p. 283.

because payment corresponds to the length of time I work on the film.¹⁷⁶

After he had completed the project, Weill set about trying to find more work. Though there is no way of confirming Weill's figures, it would appear that he was being offered significant amounts. He appears to have met with many of the major film companies, and discusses one offer with Lenya here:

Paramount have offered such a ridiculous fee for *Souls at Sea* the agent simply refused it, although it's he who really wanted me to do it. They wanted to pay \$3,000 for the entire job, and there is more music than in the Milly film, [*The River is Blue*] for which I'm getting \$7,500.¹⁷⁷

Weill hoped that he would find employment and recognition in Hollywood: 'I think I have great opportunities here, and it's entirely possible that I'll get a very big contract, because everyone says I have no competition, and they really need people like me.'¹⁷⁸ In March 1937 he wrote to Lenya updating her on their financial situation: 'I'm a little impatient at the moment, but that will pass, and besides there's no reason to be, because even if I don't do another movie now, we'll still have \$9,000 in the bank. I've been very thrifty. A real miser.'¹⁷⁹ By April 1937, Weill was thinking of returning to New York:

The agent thinks that MGM might offer me a one-year contract at approximately \$600 per week for forty or fifty-two weeks. This, of course, is not a good salary [...] It would be a very difficult decision if I were to get such an offer, because I absolutely want to do a show for New York, and my position here would be totally different if I had a real success with a "musical" in New York (the agent admits that).¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Kurt Weill, '166. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [3 March 1937]', in *Speak low (when you speak love): the letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 212-213 (p.212).

¹⁷⁷ Kurt Weill, '171. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [13 March 1937]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), p. 219 (p. 219).

¹⁷⁸ Weill, '153. [28 January 1937]', (p. 196-197).

¹⁷⁹ Weill, '171. [13 March 1937]', (p.219).

¹⁸⁰ The italics indicate use of English in the original. Kurt Weill, '178. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [5 April 1937]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 228-229 (pp. 228).

His lack of reputation in Hollywood apparently limited his ambitions. Weill is advised to go back to Broadway to write a musical: 'Everybody – without exception! – advises me against accepting a contract with MGM, because I'd be totally paralysed there and would get three times the money if I had a musical in New York.'¹⁸¹

Despite Weill's concerns, the money he was being offered was a considerable fee. For comparison, Brendan Carroll notes in his biography of Korngold that by around 1939, after having written the score for several Hollywood movies, Korngold was paid '\$12,500 per assignment', and that he could be considered highly paid in comparison to other composers at that time.¹⁸² With little proven experience, Weill was being offered and paid similar serious sums of money. In May 1937, when offered the possibility of writing the score for Fritz Lang's *You and Me*, Weill wrote to Lenya informing her: 'They've agreed to pay \$10,000 for the whole job.'¹⁸³

Weill can seem insistent in his search for income in this period, especially considering the accepted going rate for film composers. His letters to his brother Hans raise one possibility as to why he might have needed to secure such large sums of money (though he may well simply have wanted financial security). After a trip to Canada in August 1937 to change his and Lenya's visa status (in order to apply for American citizenship), he explained that the economic assets he had secured would enable his brother to enter safely into the USA:

In the meanwhile I have talked to several people in connection with the plan you talked about in your last letter, and I am glad to tell you that it will be possible to get the money which is necessary for your immigration, for a few weeks and have it on a special bank-account for

¹⁸¹ Kurt Weill, '180. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York. [11 April 1937]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. by Lys Symonette and Kim Kowalke, pp. 230-231 (p.230).

¹⁸² Brendan Carroll, *The Last Prodigy: A Biography of Erich Wolfgang Korngold* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1997), p. 275.

¹⁸³ Again, the italics here signify the use of English words in the original letter. Kurt Weill, '186. Weill in Hollywood to Lenya in New York [8 May 1937]', in *Speak Low (When You Speak Love): The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. and trans. by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 237-238 (p. 238).

you. Of course, I have to take the responsibility that it will be paid immediately when you arrive here.

Please let me know exactly, when you are ready, what I have to do with these ten thousand dollars, which kind of a paper you need from the bank, if the bank should write something, where the money came from, that means who paid it for you etc. Please arrange here everything in a way that we need the money only for a short time and that we open the bank account only in the last possible moment. I am sure that this is the simplest way to get your papers, because I have seen in Canada how easy they make it for anybody who has some money in the bank.¹⁸⁴

This presumably refers to contemporary immigration law that required an entrant to the USA to 'possess enough money to support himself without a job'.¹⁸⁵ (The other option was to 'produce affidavits showing relatives or friends in the United States would provide for him if he found no work'.¹⁸⁶) While it can be tempting to consider Weill's decisions and letters purely in the context of his theatrical and musical position, this highlights how bound they were to his wider personal circumstances. If \$10,000 was the sum Weill needed for his brother's safe entry, any examination of the kinds of fees Weill was looking for in Hollywood should at least acknowledge this. This is of course in addition to the possibility that \$10,000 was simply the figure Weill believed he deserved.

Examining Weill's economic assets during early exile highlights his complex views about his future in the USA. After receiving the \$10,000 offer for *You and Me*, he wrote to Lenya:

We want to be very careful with money, because all I'm doing right now will ultimately be justified only if I can save enough to enable me finally to do something really significant again, by my former standards. I don't want to make the mistake everyone here makes [...] to spend all the money one makes and then be forced to take on another *job* and little by little become a complete slave to Hollywood.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Kurt Weill, '[217. An Hans Weill. Mannheim New York, 4 September 1937 maschinenschriftlich]', in *Briefe an die Familie (1914-1950)*, (Veröffentlichungen der Kurt-Weill-Gesellschaft Dessau, vol. 3), ed. by Lys Symonette and Elmar Juchem, (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2000) pp. 356-357 (p. 356).

¹⁸⁵ David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls - America and the Refugee Crisis 1938-1941* (Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), p. 3.

¹⁸⁶ Wyman, p. 3.

¹⁸⁷ Weill, '186. [8 May 1937]', (p. 238).

Weill portrays Hollywood as a dangerous seducer, differentiating between the notion of 'job' and 'something really significant' in his former work (the italicised 'job' in this quote refers to Weill's use of an English word within an otherwise German letter). In an earlier letter to Cheryl Crawford, Weill compared himself to Hollywood's whore:

Don't worry, Hollywood will not get me. A whore never loves the man who pays her, she wants to get rid of him as soon as she has rendered her services. That is my relation to Hollywood (I am the whore). Most of the people try to mix the whole business with "love" – that's why they don't get away.¹⁸⁸

Weill's clarification that he was the whore, to save any confusion on Crawford's part, might suggest the rather well-worn image of a composer prostituting himself and his art for commercial gain. Weill knowingly provides his skills and labour to the highest bidder in order to use this capital to pay for or facilitate his 'real work'. Weill appears to be occupying himself with Hollywood until he has the capital to allow him to do something he regards as significant (though at no point is this something other than music theatre). In a letter written in 1936 to Heugel, he expressed the hope: 'I will be able to return to the kind of work which corresponds to my talents and ambition, and that would be the time to offer you operatic works of international calibre, which, I am sure, would be of interest to you.'¹⁸⁹

This suggestion can be clarified by reconsidering the chronology of this material. The letter to Heugel was sent in March 1936. His essay in the *Stage* was in November 1936 around the time of *Johnny Johnson's* opening, and due to financial pressures (the need to secure significant amounts of economic assets), he went to Hollywood in January 1937. The essay in *Modern Music* was published in May 1937, and presumably written while he was in Hollywood. Though Weill needed the levels of remuneration available in Hollywood, he did not particularly enjoy working there. Even in a press release about the composer in Hollywood issued in January or February 1937, Weill said 'I want to work in the theatre. No time clocks. No production supervisors. Just the

¹⁸⁸ WLRC, Photocopy, TS *Kurt Weill to Cheryl Crawford, 14 February 1937*, Ser 40., fol. Crawford, Cheryl.

¹⁸⁹ Weill, 'Weill to Heugel, 4 June 1936', (p. 164).

author and composer taking an idea and nursing it along, helping it to grow.’¹⁹⁰ Weill returned to New York in June 1937, and in August 1937 started the process of citizenship. In September 1937, Weill and Lenya moved out of Cheryl Crawford’s home to their own apartment in New York. They returned together for the production of *You and Me*, and in the summer of 1938 Weill started work with Maxwell Anderson on *Knickerbocker Holiday*.

In this chapter, I have presented original research and findings on Weill’s work as an orchestrator, and fitted this material into a wider context of his economic assets in this period. This builds on the understanding of his reputational capital, and his own intervention and development as he negotiated entry into Broadway theatre’s art worlds. This work has highlighted several contradictions and uncertainties regarding Weill’s views on cultural hierarchies, and revealed a picture of Weill as a cultural broker between art worlds. Weill clearly had not made up his mind on his activities, and felt freely able to move between art worlds and forms. In the following chapter I will consider his collaborative practice in action, in the case of *Johnny Johnson*, and his changing reputation as a result.

¹⁹⁰ This mysterious document appears to be an undated press release, but references Weill’s arrival in Hollywood a week previously to its existence so is presumably from January 1937. It is held in the WLRC, and published in their online collection.

‘Kurt Weill in Hollywood--But Not of It’, four-page unpublished typescript held in the Yale Music Library From Paul Davis - J. Walter Thompson Company 420 Lexington Avenue New York, N. Y.,
<<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/350-kurt-weill-in-hollywood>> [accessed 1 November 2009].

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

Johnny Johnson was the first of Weill's scores 'to be written, produced, and published under American conditions.'¹ It marks a crucial moment in Weill's working practice, the point at which, were the 'Two Weills' theory accurate, the composer would transform from one to the other. In fact, any of those theories of identity or those which seek to engage and explain Weill's career in the USA should necessarily be reflected here. I want to focus on Bruce Kirle's suggestion that Weill is 'Americanizing' epic theatre. I will address Kirle's critical position in light of the documentary evidence of this production process, which reveals it to be a web of multiple and often conflicting agencies.

The production, a collaboration with the Group Theatre, was broadly agreed to be an anti-war piece, written ostensibly in response to World War I. It told the story of the title character's experience during the war; Johnny, a pacifist who works as a tombstone engraver, signs up, not to impress his sweetheart Minnie Belle (though it does), but because he has heard Woodrow Wilson's assurance that this war will end all others. The piece occupies a curious tension between its nominal aims and the looming conflict that by 1936 was a very real threat. The production appeared for many to be a response to the impending war, as an act of support for contemporary isolationist sentiments. Weill denied this connection, when asked if Johnny would fight in the next war Weill answered: 'He would probably fight in it. But this play deals with the last war, not the next. If we were dealing with the conflict that is to come, an entirely new play would have to be written.'²

¹ David Drew, *Kurt Weill: A Handbook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 279.

² Ralph Winnett, 'Composer of the Hour – an Interview with Kurt Weill', *Musical America*, 25 December 1936, pp. 10, 12, p. 12
<<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/348-composer-of-the-hour>> [accessed 8 January 2009].

This inherent contradiction is emblematic of the many incongruities that *Johnny Johnson* presents. Perhaps the most problematic of these is its ambiguous position in relation to commercial theatre. *Johnny* opened in the enormous Forty-Fourth Street Theatre, in the same conditions of reception as any other commercial musical production, and yet the Group's founders had openly rejected the demands of contemporary Broadway. This simultaneous rejection of and attraction to Broadway can be observed in almost every element of its production method, for example the inherent conflict between the Group Theatre's emphasis on realism and the form of the musical. Perhaps as a result of its contradictory elements, *Johnny* has received the attention of various kinds of scholars: in musical theatre (Bruce Kirle and John Bush Jones); in American political theatre studies (most notably in Malcolm Goldstein's work); and in Group Theatre histories.³ In this chapter, I will respond primarily to Kirle's critical appraisal, as his work is being conducted within a materialist framework not unlike my own raising many questions about such an approach.

I have already examined Kirle's 2005 book, *Unfinished Show Business-Broadway Musicals as a Work in Process*, in Chapter 1. As I noted there, Kirle questions the privileging of the written performance text within musical theatre scholarship, and the dominant narrative this has created. Kirle explicitly addresses Weill, which offers the welcome prospect of engaging with recent critical writing on the composer in depth. Clearly Kirle's writing is underpinned by a materialist methodology. However, I will propose that there is a serious weakness in Kirle's work in its uncritical portrayal of Weill as Author. Kirle considers Weill as a creator figure, who is carefully enacting a master plan over his work in

³ Bruce Kirle, *Unfinished Show Business: Broadway Musicals as Works-in-Process* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005).
John Bush Jones, *Our Musicals, Ourselves: a Social History of the American Musical Theater* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2003).
Malcolm Goldstein, *The Political Stage: American Drama and Theater of the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).
Richard E. Kramer, 'The Group Theatre's "Johnny Johnson"', *The Drama Review: TDR*, 28 (1984), 49-60.
Wendy Smith, *Real Life Drama: the Group Theatre and America, 1931-1940* (New York: Knopf, 1990).

exile (apparently unhindered by the practical circumstances of his collaborations).

I will question this position by examining the available evidence around *Johnny Johnson*, using the methodology I have already established. This will provide a framework for studying the early collaborative processes of the piece, from its instigation to the development of a rehearsal script, the rehearsal process, to the reception of the production. I shall suggest that this offers a way to move beyond the dependence on signature practices in the musical, as it reveals both the process of collaboration and the presence of multiple authors whose work (and the products of that work) has previously been concealed.

By the end of this chapter I will have carried out a detailed application of the methodology to a musical through a deep analysis of its production process. I will have used existing evidence and material in an original way, in order to reveal *Johnny Johnson* as a product of a collaborative process and in doing so, open it to a new critical understanding.

BRUCE KIRLE'S APPROACH TO WEILL

Kirle's major concern is the distortion the *Oklahoma!* myth has produced in ways of thinking about the musical's text. He re-evaluates what performance text could be understood to cover in regards to the form, arguing that the preference given to the written text (book, lyrics and score) has falsified the musical's history. As a consequence, musicals with complete textual records have been valued over those that do not. This has ultimately obscured the unrecorded contribution of the performer. He concludes that the established historiography of the musical has regarded non-integrated, pre-Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals as 'unfinished or open texts and assumed their artistic inferiority' (since they rely on the contribution of the performers to complete the text), while privileging the integrated musical as 'closed, autonomous and artistically superior'.⁴ Kirle attributes this to the 'notion that works in which

⁴ Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 1.

the author has autonomy are necessarily better than works in which the performer is co-creator.⁵

Throughout his book, Kirle challenges these kinds of assumptions, demonstrating that the musical's inherent lack of authorial authority precludes what he calls a 'stable text'.⁶ Kirle proposes a methodology which is based on 'the material conditions that produce musicals, not only in terms of the process whereby text is transformed to a complex, collaborative production machine into performance but also in sociocultural terms.'⁷ He argues that the performance of the musical is an integral part of the text, and meaning can only be assessed by including it. This is the 'process' he refers to in the title: the transmission from the textual record into something an audience see, hear and experience through performance.

One limitation of this approach is that Kirle appears unconcerned with those parts of the production processes through which a written text is constructed and then developed into a performance text. I would argue that the consequence of disregarding these processes is the insinuation that the textual record is complete and unchanging after the start of rehearsals. Obviously, in moving away from a reliance on a written record, understanding the performers' contributions as co-authors of the performance text is important. However, as I have made clear, I feel that there are many more individuals to uncover in the production of what we can reasonably consider the performance text, and that ultimately, Kirle does not go far enough in opening up beyond the role of the author. The musical's method of production (including the early collaboration which produces some kind of written text, orchestration, vocal arrangement, rehearsals, out-of-town previews, previews on Broadway, opening night, and subsequent performances) constantly intervenes with the performance text. The performer is only one of many agents involved in this construction and reconstruction.

Kirle suggests that Weill 'was exerting a powerful, if different, influence on the Broadway musical' and achieved this through, 'mixing his German-Jewish

⁵ Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 23.

⁶ Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 39.

⁷ Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 2.

theatrical background with his enthusiasm for American popular musical idioms.’⁸ He explains:

Though often satirical, Weill’s musicals were rooted in German expressionism and epic theatre rather than the American farce of Kaufmann, Hart, and Ryskind. [...] Weill was to search for distinguished American dramatists with whom he could collaborate as he built on his European past and simultaneously assimilated his work into a viable commercial structure for America.⁹

Kirle argues that following the Broadway premiere of *Dreigroschenoper* in 1933, (and he does directly connect the two): ‘Weill’s Americanisation of epic theatre began with *The Eternal Road*.’¹⁰ He views *Johnny Johnson* as Weill’s next move, proposing that Weill is systematically working towards a clearly defined goal. In his narrative, each new show is a further step to transforming his German work into something viable for Broadway’s ‘commercial structure’.¹¹ (Though Kirle mentions *Knickerbocker Holiday* as part of this progression, he does not provide any explanation of how it related to epic theatre).

As I have already suggested, Kirle’s assessment of Weill’s contribution to the American musical is limited. He relies on ways of thinking about composers and the ‘creative process’ which belong to the very historiography he dismisses, and that I have already sought at length to dismantle. The above quotation reflects this, most obviously in Kirle’s choice of terminology; note the use of Weill ‘built’ and Weill ‘assimilated his work’. Weill is doing all of this in apparent isolation from his surroundings, unhindered by the reality of his circumstances. This assumption confirms a teleological narrative through Weill’s life, de-emphasising the relevant context. I have suggested that any serious critical examination of Weill’s early years in the USA or any of his compositions during this period must be qualified with both knowledge of the practicalities of exile and the musical’s method of production. To be clear, acknowledging the context of *Johnny Johnson* does not mean simply prefacing work with sombre statements to the effect that Weill was going through a

⁸ Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 94.

⁹ Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 94.

¹⁰ Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 96.

¹¹ Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 94.

difficult time, and keeping this in mind. It is a call to radically rethink the current understanding of each and every project Weill was involved in. It is necessary to address *who else* was involved in the production process: what stakes did they have in the outcome of the production? How might they have influenced proceedings? In the case of *Johnny*, whatever Weill's initial intentions, how was he ultimately able to realise them? Was he in any way hindered by other people's ambitions? What agency did Weill actually have within the collaboration as a new arrival into the art world? This chapter will address these questions, examining what the collaborative process reveals.

Kirle connects *Johnny Johnson* to epic theatre in a number of ways. Firstly he addresses its source material; he identifies both Weill and the Group Theatre's aim to 'adapt the Brecht-Weill musical form for Broadway'¹² (though this is a somewhat problematic claim that I will examine in detail), and the choice of *The Good Soldier Schweik*, which he argues 'inspired' the production.¹³ Secondly, he suggests that instead of Lee Strasberg: 'the musical probably needed to be guided by an expert in epic theatre, such as Erwin Piscator, who had directed the original German production of *Schweik*.'¹⁴ Thirdly, he criticises the 'Weill-Green musicalisation' for 'severely alter[ing] the heavily ironic tone of the German original'.¹⁵ Finally, Kirle lays the blame for the failure of the project on the possibility that 'German expressionism and epic theatre were not compatible elements for a theatrical organisation that did so much to advance American realism.'¹⁶

I want to first examine the language Kirle uses to discuss Weill, and the implications of this terminology. Through this, I will also address how Weill's theoretical approach developed in the USA. I also want to answer Kirle's suggestion that Weill was trying to Americanize his German work through *Johnny Johnson*. There is also a need to explain further what connection Weill had to the source material of *Schweik*. I will then consider the collaborative process further.

¹² Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 97.

¹³ Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 96.

¹⁴ Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 97.

¹⁵ Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 97.

¹⁶ Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 98.

KEY WORDS

Kirle's use of epic theatre, and particularly of the hyphenated Brecht-Weill musical form, is problematic. Kirle implies a straightforward concept which is easily defined (this is emphasised by placing epic theatre in one sentence and Ervin Piscator in the next).¹⁷ Group theatre historian Wendy Smith positions herself in a similar way to Kirle; in discussing the instigation of the piece she suggests that Crawford, Weill and Green:

[...] envisioned a work that would draw on diverse native American idioms - vaudeville, folklore, homespun satire - and unify them in a form of musical theatre like that Brecht and Weill had pioneered in Germany, with songs and speeches flowing naturally together.¹⁸

Kirle clearly references Smith, paraphrasing the above section as: 'using diverse American idioms such as vaudeville, folklore, and satire, they aimed to adapt the Brecht-Weill musical form for Broadway.'¹⁹ The contraction of Smith's 'Brecht and Weill' to 'Brecht-Weill' suggests a concrete definition. Though Smith defines the kind of theatre Brecht and Weill had developed as 'songs and speeches flowing naturally together', Kirle assumes the reader knows exactly what he means. Such a straightforward definition fictionalises not only the partnership between the two, but the products of that collaboration. It masks what is in reality a series of complex shifts in definitions for both Brecht and Weill. Kirle suggests continuity, agreement and a consistency in what was in reality a tumultuous association. It is difficult to imagine that Kirle would agree with Smith's suggestion of unity between music and text, since this is not how he understands music to function in the epic theatre.

I want to investigate what epic theatre means for Brecht and Weill and explore the interconnected idea of *gestic* music. (Though Kirle does not directly mention the latter, it is necessary to understand its function for Weill, because it plays such a central role in the overall concept.) Understanding how Weill's theoretical position, and how it differs from Brecht's own ideas, will facilitate the unpicking of Kirle's 'Brecht-Weill musical form'.

¹⁷ Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 97.

¹⁸ Smith, *Real Life Drama*, p. 261.

¹⁹ Kirle, *Show Business*, p. 97.

EPIC THEATRE

Brecht's version of epic theatre obviously alludes to a particular kind of theatre which is set up in opposition to forms of dramatic realism. Yet actual definitive meanings are extremely difficult to pin down. Susan Borwick has carried out a lengthy survey of Brecht and Weill's changing usage of the term throughout their collaboration in Germany. She comes to the conclusion that 'neither man was absolutely consistent in thought or terminology. Rather, each often changed his mind and even vocabulary.'²⁰ Their numerous disagreements are recorded in numerous published essays and notes. Borwick notes that around the premiere of *Dreigroschenoper* they happened, remarkably, to agree: 'the term "epic theatre" meant, to both collaborators, a new type of "primitive" theatre that, by design, reported events rather than conjured up emotional reactions from its audience.'²¹

Brecht developed his epic theatre into a set of dramaturgical requirements that would shape the structure of a performance text and its dramatic presentation. The definition found in his 1930 essay 'The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre', seems closest to what we would casually associate with Kierkegaard's usage. The essay contains Brecht's well known table of comparisons between dramatic and epic theatre, in which he observes that in the former 'the spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience' while in the latter 'the spectator stands outside, studies'.²² Epic theatre for Brecht had both dramaturgical and social ambitions. To serve the dramaturgical, he required the 'radical separation of the elements'.²³ Brecht positions epic theatre in opposition to *Gesamtkunstwerk*, arguing that 'so long as the arts are supposed to be "fused" together, the various elements will all be equally degraded, and each will act as a mere "feed" to the rest'.²⁴ Instead, he argues: 'Words, music

²⁰ Susan Borwick, 'Weill's and Brecht's Theories on Music in Drama', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 4.1 (1982), 39–67 (p. 40).

²¹ Borwick, (p. 41).

²² Bertolt Brecht, '13. The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre (notes to the opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*)', in *Brecht on theatre: the development of an aesthetic*, ed. by John Willet (London: Methuen Drama, 2001), pp. 37–38, (p. 38).

²³ [Emphasis in original.] Brecht, 'Epic Theatre', (p. 37).

²⁴ Brecht, 'Epic Theatre', (p. 37–38).

and setting must become more independent of one another.²⁵ In terms of Weill's political aims, he hopes that by making content an 'independent component, to which text, music and setting adopt attitudes', the event would not be primarily experimental, but demand each audience member to 'cast his vote'.²⁶

For Brecht, music should be radically disconnected from the other elements of theatre, as Borwick explains: 'Epic form, to Brecht in 1931, had no goal, only a cutting-off point. It was governed by a tension that pitted component parts against one another.'²⁷ Unsurprisingly, there was a divergence of opinion between Brecht and Weill over the place of music in this new theatre. According to Borwick, Weill never fully agreed with Brecht, arguing that 'the epic concept by then implied a dramatic structure delineated by its musical form, a form that emphasized musical simplicity in setting the text so that the dramatic events would be communicated with absolute clarity.'²⁸ This disagreement came to a head in their written notes on *Mahagonny*, over the importance of music and its structural function. Weill explained that the opera's theme, (i.e. the rise and fall of a city) had allowed them to select 'the purest form of epic theatre, which is also the purest form of musical theatre.'²⁹ This separation gave an exact form to the place of music within the structure of *Mahagonny*:

It is a series of twenty-one separate musical forms. Each of these forms is a closed scene, and each introduced by inscription in narrative form. The music here is no longer a plot advancing element; it enters at the point where certain conditions are reached.³⁰

Though Weill did not specify exactly what these conditions are, he suggested that 'from the beginning the libretto is planned so that it presents a series of conditions yielding a dramatic form only in its musically-determined dynamic

²⁵ Brecht, 'Epic Theatre', (p. 38).

²⁶ Brecht, 'Epic Theatre', (p. 39).

²⁷ Borwick, (p. 47).

²⁸ Borwick, (p. 48).

²⁹ Kurt Weill, 'Notes to my opera *Mahagonny*' ("Anmerkungen zu meiner Oper *Mahagonny*"), *Die Musik*, 22 (March 1930), 440-41, reprinted in Kim Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979), pp. 517-518 (p. 517).

³⁰ Weill, 'Notes to my opera', (p. 517).

course.³¹ In another essay on *Mahagonny*, Weill provided a more detailed description:

The dramatic conduct of the singers, the movement of the chorus, as well as the entire performance style of this opera, are principally defined by the style of the music. At no time is this music illustrative. [...] the style of the work is neither naturalistic or symbolic. Rather it can be labelled as "real", for it shows life as represented in the sphere of art.³²

After 1930, Weill appears to have stopped involving himself in such arguments with Brecht over epic theatre. Borwick notes that this temporary silence allowed Brecht to 'claim [...] the term for himself and subtly redefine [it]. By "redesigning" the concept, he constructed a bridge between his early theories and his later ideas on the alienation-effect and the political theatre.'³³ Brecht and Weill's distinct treatment of the term means that as Borwick proposes: 'We should not impose the dramatic philosophy of one collaborator upon the other.'³⁴ To reiterate, for Weill the function of epic theatre was not the separation of elements, or the necessary social implications that it had for Brecht. Rather, it was the possibility for musical simplicity it created, as we have noted before: 'so that the dramatic events would be communicated with absolute clarity.'³⁵

GESTIC MUSIC

As I am considering Weill's dramaturgical position on the balance of music and drama, I want to address the related, though no less problematic expression of *gestus*. Though Kirle does not refer to *gestic* music himself, the term is an important part of both Brecht and Weill's theories about epic theatre, though with different implications. There are many definitions, which should by now be unsurprising for a term which has no direct English equivalent and was used by Brecht. For Weill *gestic* music broadly related to

³¹ Weill, 'Notes to my opera', (p. 517).

³² Kurt Weill, 'Foreword to the Production Book of the Opera *Aufstieg und Fall Der Stadt Mahagonny* (Vorword zum Regibuch der Oper *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*)', *Anbruch*, 12 January 1930, pp. 5-7, reprinted in Kim Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979), pp. 514-516 (p. 515).

³³ Borwick, (p. 48).

³⁴ Borwick, (p. 56).

³⁵ Borwick, (p. 48).

the essence of what made theatre-music music for the theatre. Weill wrote in an early essay explaining the principles of *gestic* music in 1929: 'There must be specific features that permit music to seem appropriate for the theatre, and I believe that these qualities can be summarised as a concept I am inclined to call the *gestic* character of music.'³⁶ Weill positions his work against 'the theatre of the preceding era', which he argues was written primarily for its 'sensual palatability'.³⁷ Weill suggests that this kind of music 'sought to titillate, excite, stimulate, and upset the spectator'.³⁸ He argues that this kind of theatre was pleasurable not only to its spectators but also to its 'creator', and he describes the latter as an 'epicurean'.³⁹ Weill contrasts this with the detachment of epic theatre which 'counts on a spectator who follows the proceedings with the quiet composure of a thinking man and who, since he really wants to think, receives any demand on his pleasure centres as an annoyance'.⁴⁰ This new theatre consequently 'puts greater value on actors than on stage apparatus, and denies its creator of the epicurean posture that its audience renounces'.⁴¹ (Though this may seem Weill at his most Brechtian, Kim Kowalke adds the editorial warning that 'lest it be incorrectly assumed that Brecht was the originator of the aesthetic distance advocated by Weill here', the origin of these comments are from Busoni's warning that 'if an artist wishes to move others, he must not allow himself to be moved'.⁴²)

Michael Morley explains that the qualities of *gestic* music are integral to Weill's music theatre in this period:

It meant that the music required a rhythmic shape that embodied the ebb and flow of both speech patterns and the gist of thought itself. Once established, that shape should not be obscured by an overly ornate deployment of any melodic devices which, though pleasing to

³⁶ Kurt Weill, 'Concerning the Gestic Character of Music ("Über den gestischen Charakter der Musik")', *Die Musik*, 21 (March 1929), 419-23, reprinted in Kim Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979), pp. 491-493 (p. 491).

³⁷ Weill, 'Gestic Character of Music', (p. 491).

³⁸ Weill, 'Gestic Character of Music', (p. 491).

³⁹ Weill, 'Gestic Character of Music', (p. 491).

⁴⁰ Weill, 'Gestic Character of Music', (p. 491).

⁴¹ Weill, 'Gestic Character of Music', (p. 491).

⁴² Kowalke, *Kurt Weill in Europe*, footnote 3, p. 496.

the ear and sensibilities, might have little to do with a sense of the words.⁴³

Morley suggests that Weill had arrived at the idea of *gestic* music 'by gradually stripping away the compositional excesses that Wagnerian and Straussian music drama had led to [...] and concentrating on concise melodic and rhythmic cells to convey musically the underlying dramatic kernel of the scene.'⁴⁴ What remained was the primary function of music in drama, as Weill himself explains:

The form of opera is an absurdity if it does not succeed in granting music a predominant position in its overall structure and in execution of even the most particular details. The music of an opera cannot abandon the whole task of the drama and its idea to the text and a stage setting; it must take an active role in the presentation of the proceedings.⁴⁵

This active role was in Weill's words to 'elucidate[s] the events on stage' and 'eliminate [...] any doubt or misunderstanding' for the audience in interpreting what they have seen.⁴⁶ Morley connects these ideas in Weill's work to Busoni. He suggests that Busoni and Weill shared approaches, though Weill developed the theoretical approach of his teacher into the 'nature and the function of *gestic* music; how the composer can *assist* the performer to convey the appropriate attitude to any particular incident at any particular moment.'⁴⁷

Even in Weill's early writing on *gestic* music, the idea of transmission to the audience is already established. Epic theatre for Weill is ultimately concerned with clarity in the purpose of music on stage. However, Weill also appears to be actively trying to control the way in which music reaches its audience, and in which score becomes a performance event. He is trying to ensure that the audience will hear exactly what he wants them to, thereby controlling the role of the mediator (in this case, the performer). He demands that performance be a continuation of the collaboration, in which he retains an element of control:

⁴³ Michael Morley, 'Suiting the action to the word: some observations on *Gestus* and *Gestische Musik*', in *Essays on a New Orpheus*, ed. by Kim H Kowalke (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 183-201 (p. 184-185).

⁴⁴ Morley, (p. 183).

⁴⁵ Weill, 'Gestic Character of Music', (p. 492).

⁴⁶ Weill, 'Gestic Character of Music', (p. 492).

⁴⁷ [Emphasis in original.] Morley, (p. 188).

the text is completed only at the point of performance through the composer, the performer, the orchestra, the conductor and the audience.

It is now clear that Weill's theoretical position, his collaboration with Brecht, and the products of their work cannot be summed up into anything resembling a straightforward model. The place of music in drama shifts for both collaborators. For Weill, epic theatre and *gestus* relate to the way music reaches an audience, and a desire for absolute clarity in this transmission process. I would suggest that this emphasis is particularly important in understanding his intent in the USA.

EPIC THEATRE IN AMERICA?

There is, I want to acknowledge, a single instance when Weill directly uses the term epic theatre in the USA to mean the purposeful separation of the elements of music and drama. It is found in a press release for *The Eternal Road*, from 1935, presumably for the planned November opening. Weill is quoted as saying 'the musical theatre is predominantly epic in character', going on to explain his theory of the dramaturgical function of music in drama.⁴⁸ Obviously any press release is problematic source material,

⁴⁸ This statement comes from a press release, a copy of which is held in the WLRC and dated 1935. The release prefaces the quote as below:

Commenting on his own work, Kurt Weill said: "The musical theatre is predominantly epic in character. The role played by music is not that of drawing out the inner action, knitting together transitional phases, bringing out events and causing passions to flare high; rather does it go its own way chiming in at static moments of the action. This is possible only with an epic-narrative form of action which makes the course of events on the stage perfectly clear to the audience, so that the music, framed in this quiet development, can retain its concertistic character and achieve its purely musical effect in undisturbed harmony. Not to interpret musically the objectively presented course of the action, but to let this action run parallel to an equally objective flow of music – that is the inner sense of the new musical theatre."

This quote appears verbatim in an apparent interview piece, given to *The American Hebrew* on January 8, 1937, when the production finally opened, which would otherwise lead us to assume that this was still Weill's position over a year later. However, the *American Hebrew* piece contains significant portions of text that are lifted straight out of an earlier interview Weill gave to the *New York Times*, 'Score for *The Eternal Road*' on December 27, 1936. This suggests that the author of the later article may not have spoken to Weill at all,

especially since in this example the origin of the quote is not recorded. The release must have been drafted shortly after (or even before) Weill's arrival, and subsequent to it the composer talked about American musical theatre in very different terms. In an interview given to the *New York Times* in December 1936, Weill says: 'Our task was to bind speech and music into perfect fusion. I thought to make the musical score an integral part of the action, extending the movement of word and its operation so that the values of speech found their complement in the values of the music.'⁴⁹ In 'The Alchemy of Music' essay in the *Stage* in 1936, Weill writes that 'song is not a simple interruption of action, which could proceed very well without it. It is an indispensable aid to comprehension of the play and its nature; it projects the actions of the play to a different and higher level.'⁵⁰ For Weill, song not only illuminates the action, but cannot be separated from it.

In the many interviews, letters and essays that document his work in this period, Weill actively locates himself as a force within American theatre. His notes for the Group Theatre lecture in the summer of 1936 provide the clearest

and I can only assume that any comments on epic theatre it contains represent Weill's position only at the time of the press release, which must have taken place before or shortly after his arrival in America.

Press release:

New York, WLRC, TS Reinhardt Stage Productions & M.W.W. Productions, General Information on the Music for Reinhardt's "*The Eternal Road*" 1935 (2 pages), fol. *Eternal Road* Production File, p. 2.

Articles:

'Score for 'The Eternal Road', *New York Times*, 27 December 1936, section Drama-Screen-Music Art-Radio-Hobbies, pg. X7, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=110051238&Fmt=10&clientId=67119&RQT=309&VName=HNP>> [accessed 27 January 2010].
 'Protagonist of Music in the Theatre', *The American Hebrew*, 8 January 1937, pp. 756-757, <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/kurt-weill/for-further-reading/366-protagonist-of-music-in-the-theatre>> [accessed 12 July 2009].

⁴⁹ 'Score for 'The Eternal Road'.

⁵⁰ Kurt Weill, 'The Alchemy of Music: Music may be the ingredient that will transmute the play into living theatre', *Stage*, 14.2 (November 1936), pp. 63-64 <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/the-alchemy-of-music>> [accessed 10 January 2009].

model of Weill's theoretical principles at the time Kirle is specifically dealing with, around *Johnny Johnson*. Weill writes:

What is musical theatre? It is the purest form of the poetic theatre. End of realistic theatre in America. Playwrights looking for a form to express ideas and events of our time in poetic drama. The musical theatre has solved this problem. In a theatre with music the audience is immediately inclined to follow a poetic line. Music theatre as a new expression of modern life. Music brings together the elements of theatre: the idea, the humor [*sic*], the sentiment. Shortening technique of musical theatre; Music creates a mood of a scene in a minute, where the drama would need a whole scene. Stimulanz, Excitement, Enthousiasm [*sic*].⁵¹

Weill builds on his suggestion that poetic theatre might offer a dramatist a new route to examine contemporary 'ideas and events', in order to open the possibility for a third way for music theatre. However, all of this theory is built on the principles of *gestic* music and its emphasis on clarity. Kirle overlooks this, because he does not acknowledge that Weill developed his theoretical model and practice into something inseparable from his environment.

WEILL'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE SOURCE MATERIAL

In order to address the choice of *Schweik* as source material for the collaboration, I want to clarify Weill's ongoing association with the story before and after *Johnny Johnson*, and his professional links to Brecht and Piscator. Jaroslav Hašek, a Czechoslovakian novelist, published the earliest *Schweik* story in 1912, and wrote four books with the character of the 'stoical but none-too-bright soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army'.⁵² Brecht subsequently contributed text to Erwin Piscator's adaptation in 1928, entitled *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schweik*.⁵³ After the success of *Mahagonny*

⁵¹ WLRC, Photocopy, TS with MS additions, Kurt Weill *Notes for lecture to Group Theatre: 'What is Musical Theatre?'* 27 July 1936.

⁵² Christopher Bellamy, 'Hašek, Jaroslav', in *The Oxford Companion to Military History*, ed. by Richard Holmes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), in *Oxford Reference Online* <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t139.e545>> [accessed 13 February 2010].

⁵³ There are various accounts to the authorial contributions to this production, see John Willett, *Brecht in Context: Comparative Approaches* (London: Methuen, 1998), p. 104.

(1927), Weill felt that *Schweik* might be suitable as a source for another opera; David Drew suggests that it was particularly suitable as the composer planned to write his first 'large-scale serio-comic opera'.⁵⁴ However, the complicated copyright issues around *Schweik* meant that Brecht and Weill were unable to secure the rights. Weill collaborated instead with Casper Neher on *Die Bürgschaft*, and shortly afterwards Brecht and Weill's collaboration came to an end.

After 1940 the idea was raised once again (Brecht arrived in the USA in 1941), and Piscator and Brecht began to discuss the project.⁵⁵ Confusingly, over the next three years two separate plans for adaptation emerge. Piscator had been planning a version with the Theatre Guild, but 'more or less simultaneously [...] Brecht was approached by Piscator's old rival Aufricht, who wanted him to make a musical version for Broadway which would be set by Kurt Weill.'⁵⁶ Willett records that Piscator was informed of this development only after Brecht and Weill spent a week working together, and that he was still unaware a second producer (Aufricht) had secured the rights. When a script was eventually created, Weill 'saw no practical chance of success for Brecht's text unless it was radically Americanised'.⁵⁷ Piscator, on learning of the true situation was furious, but in any case the Theatre Guild had rejected Brecht's script; on the basis that (as Drew remarks) 'neither the form, nor the subject matter, nor the treatment, were suitable'.⁵⁸ In December 1943, Weill wrote again to Brecht, clarifying the three conditions of his participation in any future *Schweik* project:

First, that the play is adapted by a top-flight American writer and directed by top-flight American director; second that Lenya plays the role of landlady; and third that the play is written as a 'musical play' with more openings and music than the present version. In no event will I write 'incidental music'.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Drew, *Handbook*, p. 384.

⁵⁵ Willett, p. 113.

⁵⁶ Willett, p. 113.

⁵⁷ Willett, p. 114.

⁵⁸ Drew, *Handbook*, p. 411.

⁵⁹ Letter from Weill in Hollywood to Brecht in New York [5 December 1943] in Drew, *Handbook*, p. 412.

Brecht rejected Weill's sense of American conditions of performance, as Willett notes: 'these stipulations by the now successful Broadway composer were naturally unacceptable to Brecht, who was not prepared to act (or be paid) as a mere libretto-writer, and [...] refused to sacrifice ultimate control over his play.'⁶⁰ In 1943, Weill's reticence in adapting *Schweik* was clearly due to his knowledge of Broadway conditions – his specific requirements for production demonstrate he was keenly aware of what was required. His personal concerns about his own cultural capital are also evident.

As the possible source material for *Johnny Johnson* in 1936, Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Schweik* is for Kirle a useful connection between the European Other and the necessarily Brechtian epic model. It facilitates a link between 'Brecht-Weill' epic theatre as a source, through an apparent Americanization of the *Schweik* text. By suggesting that the production would have been better served by *Schweik*'s original director (Piscator), Kirle attempts to reinforce his argument.⁶¹ However, this is an oversimplification of the collaborative process. The source material's particular cachet, as something European or more specifically as something non-American, was attractive to *Johnny Johnson*'s collaborators in a variety of ways. To understand this I want to consider that Weill was part of a group of individuals who had agreed to work from this material for a variety of motives. Each individual may have regarded *Schweik*'s importance in the process of adaptation differently. Once again, there is a need to move beyond Weill in examining this collaboration.

BEYOND THE AUTHOR

Kirle depicted Weill as if he was carrying out his planned Americanization of epic theatre through *Johnny Johnson*; in this scenario Weill's intentions were the primary force in shaping the final product. The method of production for any musical during this period is necessarily intensely collaborative. This is true not only for those writing the work, as the shape and nature of the piece

⁶⁰ Willett, p. 184.

⁶¹ It is worth noting that even Piscator disagreed with Brecht. After seeing Brecht's production of *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* in 1945, Piscator wrote that 'our ideas on epic theatre are so different that I preferred to leave [Brecht] alone.' Erwin Piscator, 'Letter to Leon Askin, 3 July 1945', in Willett, p. 116.

are established, but also for producers who must find funding, and between director and designers, as they consider staging. This is also true across roles: a director must engage with the writers, the producer needs to know how much the design will cost and so on. Further contributors work on the music: in this case Weill as composer, Weill as orchestrator, Weill as arranger and the musical director, Lehman Engel.

The aim of this case study is to consider this collaboration process while avoiding the traps of the author ideology. I will examine the instigation of the project (i.e. the transition from the origin of an idea to an actual project with collaborators), the subsequent development process that prepared a version of the text which could then be rehearsed, and the staging of that text in performance. My methodology enables collaborative work to be properly considered, particularly because it is designed with incomplete and nonlinear evidence in mind. It is important to emphasise that my approach is not a positivist quest to understand *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. Even if anyone wanted to, in the case of *Johnny Johnson* the evidence simply does not exist, and what does remain is often intensely problematic. Little of this surviving material dates from the collaboration; the majority of the evidence is in the form of later recollections (biographies, interviews and talks). These accounts were recorded after the Group Theatre closed, and generally after the communist scares of the late 1940s and 1950s. (The testimony of Group member Elia Kazan to the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities is often the proverbial elephant in the room.) The need to present oneself as 'not a communist' is particularly evident in Cheryl Crawford's 1977 biography, and particularly in her *ex post facto* reinterpretation of the trip she took with Lee Strasberg and Harold Clurman to Russia in 1935.⁶² As a result, there is no way to establish a conclusive order of events during the development of *Johnny*, because the various reports deviate so much it is impossible to know whose idea it was, or who did what, in what order.

⁶² See 'The Russian Theatre, 1935' in Cheryl Crawford, *One Naked Individual: My Fifty Years in the Theatre* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1977), pp. 73-89.

I have however already established in the case of *The Opera from Mannheim*, where almost nothing survives and there was no production to speak of, that this is not actually necessary, and that a great deal of new information can be gathered from simply acknowledging the collaborative process took place. The process of collaboration for *Johnny Johnson* was a series of interactions between many individuals such as Paul Green, Cheryl Crawford, Lee Strasberg and Harold Clurman, and the company itself, the Group Theatre. Each collaborator had a specific stake in the work, with specific reasons for their involvement, and certain kinds of capital they were hoping to gain from the production. Understanding these negotiations provides us with a way to look at collaboration without relying on the Author. It is useful to think about what part of this process the author's 'artistic intention' is traditionally supposed to control, perhaps during the early writing stage, when it is assumed an author works alone. I will consider this phase first, which is in reality a period often characterised by the collaboration of a small number of practitioners. In the case of *Johnny Johnson*, this includes the composer, the playwright/lyricist and Cheryl Crawford in the producer/director role (although it would appear with some dramaturgical influence). In order to do this, I want to first establish the situation the Group Theatre was in when the project was instigated.

A GENERAL BACKGROUND TO THE GROUP THEATRE

The Group Theatre may be best remembered for its association with realism in American Theatre, or for the connection with Method acting that Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler would go on to develop in the Actors Studio.⁶³ However, the Group had been founded with a more complicated mission, and had as much to do with how a play was produced as how it would be rehearsed. The formation of the company had taken place through a series of disputes between its founders, Lee Strasberg, Harold Clurman and Cheryl Crawford, and the predominant producer of the non-commercial Theatre Guild (the Guild employed both Clurman and Crawford). Clurman had

⁶³ Note for example the special issue of *The Drama Review*, which aimed to counteract the idea that 'the Group Theatre' was exclusively realistic.' M.K., 'The Group Theatre: An Introduction', *The Drama Review: TDR*, 28.4 (Winter, 1984), 2 (p. 2).

wanted to establish his own theatre company that would take on experimental and optimistic work, and faced the frustration that while his plans for a new theatre 'hung in limbo for want of financing [...] the Guild wallowed in cash and facile nihilism.'⁶⁴ Sensing this frustration, the Guild allowed Clurman and his co-conspirators to form a subsidiary company for the purpose of experimental work, called the 'Theatre Guild Studio'.⁶⁵ Though they were able to successfully produce a play, *Red Rust* in 1929, Smith suggests that the Guild's board grew restless, and 'simply shut the project down'.⁶⁶ Crawford wrote in her biography that 'the swift and autocratic demise of the theatrical studio had only served to inflame Harold and me.'⁶⁷ Nonetheless, she renewed her contract with the Guild, and became the assistant to the Board of Managers.⁶⁸ This was in spite of her obvious irritation at what in her own words seemed like a stalemate between the Guild's financial security and its inability to find 'exciting plays to satisfy their elite audiences'.⁶⁹

By November 1930, Clurman had started to give a series of regular talks describing the kind of communal theatre he wanted to establish to young actors and theatre professionals. In this excerpt (from a document written to the Guild to explain what he had been saying at the meetings), Clurman described his ambition:

A theatre is created when people with common interests and tastes unite to devise ways and means whereby they give their group feeling an adequate theatrical expression. [...] if the theatre is an art, if it has any value beyond decorating the emptiness of our existence, it too, collective art though it be, must have an analogous singleness of meaning and direction.⁷⁰

Crawford recalled: 'Harold's jeremiads deplored the state of the theatre, and his Whitmanesque moods the ideal, what it could be. Some of the listeners

⁶⁴ Smith, *Real Life Drama* p. 24.

⁶⁵ Smith, *Real Life Drama* p. 25.

⁶⁶ Smith, *Real Life Drama* p. 27.

⁶⁷ Crawford, *One Naked*, pp. 48-49.

⁶⁸ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 49.

⁶⁹ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 50.

⁷⁰ New York, Lincoln Center, Roman Bohnen Collection, TS Harold Clurman, 'Plans for a First Studio', unpublished proposal by Harold Clurman, written in 1931 in response to the Theatre Guild's questions about his Friday night talks, in Smith, p. 7.

were bored or baffled and never returned. Others were exalted by Harold's vision and eager to commit themselves.⁷¹ When Crawford was asked to explain herself to the Guild, Smith notes that she produced 'a decidedly tactless paper discussing the Group's artistic and spiritual goals [...] urging the Guild to prove by funding the Group that 'the theatre has a future, that something permanently valuable may still be accomplished.'⁷² Their new company was consistently positioned in opposition to the Guild.

Clurman believed that this new theatre company 'had to be founded on life values', arguing that 'our interest in the life of our times must lead us to the discovery of those methods that would most truly convey this life through the theatre.'⁷³ His search for such methods had led both Strasberg and himself to the Moscow Art Theatre and Stanislavsky, initially through the teaching of Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya at the American Laboratory Theatre.⁷⁴ Clurman, who had spent time in Paris in his youth, had 'admired the productions of the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier' and had 'attended lectures by its director, Jacques Copeau, who espoused a unified theatre with organized training for actors similar to what Clurman would later call for in his own talks.'⁷⁵ Clurman felt strongly that the best way to run a theatre company would be as a collaborative effort. This was not only in reference to actors (about whom he noted that 'there were to be no stars in our theatre') but also in respect to writers and directors:⁷⁶

The playwright too could be worked with, the power of his play could be enhanced by the joint creativity of the theatrical group as a whole, which saw in the play a vehicle to convey a motif fundamental to the theatre's main interest. The director was the leader of the theatrical group, unifying its various efforts, enunciating its basic aims, tied to it not as a master to his slave, but as a head to a body.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 52.

⁷² Un-named report in Smith, *Real Life Drama*, p. 32.

⁷³ Harold Clurman, *The Fervent Years: The Story of The Group Theatre and The Thirties* (New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1975), p. 34.

⁷⁴ Smith, *Real Life Drama* p. 9.

⁷⁵ Smith, *Real Life Drama* p. 10-11.

⁷⁶ Clurman, *Fervent Years*, p. 35.

⁷⁷ Clurman, *Fervent Years*, p. 35.

Clurman, Strasberg and Crawford planned to go to the country and work on a play during the summer, as Smith notes, 'as both Stanislavsky and Copeau had done before them.'⁷⁸ The Guild were surprisingly sympathetic to their cause and, according to Smith, allowed Crawford and Clurman to remain employees as well as contributing the rights to a play it had the option for (Paul Green's *The House of Connolly*), and \$1,000 towards the Group's rehearsal expenses.⁷⁹ Crawford finally resigned, later recalling that the Guild 'wasn't what I really wanted in a theatre after all. Not for nothing had I daydreamed as a child of being a missionary. All that had changed was the religion.'⁸⁰ Contemporary critic Barrett H. Clark (who considered himself an 'official sponsor' of the Group Theatre) echoed the idea of religious conviction in his 1939 appraisal of the Group's work:⁸¹

I thought that more work and less philosophy would have enabled them to start more quickly than they did, and without the loss of anything that could not be spared. But the directors apparently had to hypnotize themselves into an almost religious mood before they actually set to work in their theatre. Once the Group was all set, and convinced that their mission was important, they did get down to brass tacks.⁸²

Five years later, by the early summer of 1936 when *Johnny Johnson* was first instigated, the Group had produced fourteen plays, including two Clifford Odets' plays, perhaps their best known productions, in January and February 1935, respectively *Waiting for Lefty* and *Awake and Sing*. The directors visited Russia for five weeks, where they met Stanislavsky and Meyerhold, and according to Cheryl Crawford, saw twenty-nine productions there.⁸³ On their return, serious cracks were starting to appear in the stability of the Group, particularly in regard to its collaborative structure. In response to a critical paper the actors had submitted to the directors, Clurman restructured the

⁷⁸ Smith, *Real Life Drama* p. 29.

⁷⁹ Smith, *Real Life Drama* p. 52.

⁸⁰ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 51.

⁸¹ Barrett H. Clark, 'Our Most American Drama: Recent Developments, 1930-39', *The English Journal*, 28 (1939), 333-342 (p. 334).

⁸² Clark, (p. 334).

⁸³ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 82.

management of the Group so that 'he would become the managing director supported by a committee of actors'.⁸⁴

This restructuring reflected the critical stage the Group theatre found themselves at in 1936. Their finances had reached a particularly low ebb, as Crawford recalled: '*Awake and Sing* had not made any money on tour, we had, as usual, no funds; we decided to play again for our suppers.'⁸⁵ *Johnny's* set designer Donald Oenslager noted that 'the Group Theatre provided entertainment for the Pinebrook club at Nichols, Connecticut, which enabled them to carry on daily preparations for their fall production.'⁸⁶ The Group's activities received attention from the press, who seemed unaware of the problems the company were having. The *New York Times* published an article on the 'Summer Activities of the Reorganised Group Theatre', which suggested that they were at the pinnacle of their success: 'to have reached the estate, after fourteen productions, of being called "the finest acting institution in this if not in any other land" by the late Percy Hammond, is clearly another azure ribbon on the happily extended chest.'⁸⁷ This article continues in a tone of surprise that the Group is not resting on its laurels, but rather embarking on a 'course of training as basic and intensive as if this were its first summer away and it was about to enter on the first stretch of the collective career'.⁸⁸

With hindsight it is clear that the Group was perilously close to the point of collapse, something that Smith puts down to the 'inherent difficulty of running a theatre with un-commercial ideals - artistic or political - in a

⁸⁴ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 93.

⁸⁵ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 93.

⁸⁶ Donald Oenslager, *The Theatre of Donald Oenslager* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), p. 68.

⁸⁷ (Percy Hammond had been the *New York Tribune's* theatre critic.)

'Company Pastoral, Notes on the Activities of a Reorganised Group Theatre', *New York Times*, 2 August 1936, section Drama-Screen-Music-Art-Fashions-Radio-Shoppers' Columns-Gardens, p. XI,

<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=85413009&Fmt=10&clientId=67119&RQT=309&VName=HNP>> [accessed 29 January 2010].

⁸⁸ 'Company Pastoral', p. XI.

commercial system.’⁸⁹ Smith also suggests that the passage of time was perhaps the most significant reason for their collapse:

They couldn’t change Broadway, and they were unwilling to be relegated to the fringe of the American theatre by working elsewhere. They’d set themselves an impossible goal and achieved it for five years in large measure thanks to the extraordinary sacrifices made by every member. But privations endured gladly, even gaily, by people in their early twenties just starting out in the theatre were harder to take five years later, when children and other outside responsibilities made a stable income as important as the Group Idea.⁹⁰

Smith highlights the inherent contradiction in the Group’s position, a rejection of Broadway alongside the simultaneous need to embrace it. A 1949 article by Paul Green explained how this same need manifested itself in his search for a ‘symphonic drama’:

I wrote the piece out to the best of my ability. Then began the peddling of it for Broadway. I experienced to the fullest the torturous way to production so often endured by American play-wrights. I would have been much wiser of course to have found some amateur group and perfected the production with them first. But, no, it must be Broadway or nothing.⁹¹

For Green, and perhaps the Group theatre, this commitment to Broadway seems to contain multiple desires, on the one hand to ‘convert’ mainstream theatre (again a religious metaphor emerges), and on the other a need not to be sidelined by the place of reception. The ‘Broadway or nothing’ attitude underpins the Group’s production of *Johnny* – as much as they were repelled by the reality of its conditions of production, they were unable to leave it behind. In 1936 in the Group magazine, Cheryl Crawford wrote an article highlighting the contradiction they faced: ‘We are too considerate of ourselves as people, of wanting rest, leisure, all kinds of experience, a finger in every pie from Broadway to Marx in one mouthful.’⁹²

⁸⁹ Smith, *Real Life Drama* p. 272.

⁹⁰ Smith, *Real Life Drama* p. 272.

⁹¹ Paul Green, ‘Symphonic Drama’, *The English Journal*, 38 (1949), 177-183 (p. 180).

⁹² This article was republished in a special edition of this journal, which featured content from many of those involved in the Group. Cheryl Crawford, ‘Cheryl Crawford on Repertory and Money’, *Educational Theatre Journal*, 28 (1976), 452-453 (p. 453).

THE GROUP THEATRE AND *JOHNNY JOHNSON*

"Johnny Johnson" is closing a week from tonight, and after that the future of the Group Theatre is uncertain. It has no immediate plans and no plays, and will produce nothing new this season. [...] The organization's current play, while receiving excellent notices, has made no money; its holiday business was good but recently has fallen off.⁹³

This *New York Times* article heralding *Johnny's* closure, seems rather tame when compared to the actors' own report on the state of the Group written in December 1936, which solemnly declared 'the hour of crisis impends'.⁹⁴ After the production closed in January 1937, the company temporarily disbanded to reassess its situation, though given the state of affairs at the start of *Johnny* it could hardly have come as a surprise. The managerial re-shuffle, and the underlying tension which had provoked it, led to the situation where, as Wendy Smith notes: 'Everything depended on *Johnny Johnson*; it seemed possible that if the show failed, it would be the end of them.'⁹⁵

THE ORIGINS OF *JOHNNY JOHNSON*

The various accounts of the instigation of *Johnny* all suggest that Weill was attempting to work on a project with an American outlook. Cheryl Crawford recalled in her biography: 'Weill was eager to do something with an American background, and given my perennial fondness for good popular music, I was eager to work with him.'⁹⁶ Harold Clurman's biography reveals Weill's prior reputation in the Group:

About this time there had arrived from abroad the composer whose *Three-Penny Opera* (on records) might have been described as a Group pastime. We befriended Kurt Weill, and Stella Adler insisted that he must do a musical play for us along the lines he had made known in Germany. Weill suggested one day that he would like to do an American equivalent of the comic Czech war novel *The Good Soldier Schweik*, which had been dramatized and produced with success in Berlin. We set about seeking a dramatist to work on it with Weill.⁹⁷

⁹³ 'News of the Stage', *New York Times*, 9 January 1937, p. 20.

⁹⁴ WLRC, Photocopy, *TS Report of the Actors' Committee to the Directors of the Group*, p. 1.

⁹⁵ Smith, *Real Life Drama*, p. 277.

⁹⁶ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 91.

⁹⁷ Clurman, *Fervent Years*, pp. 183-184.

For the Group as an institution, the choice of Kurt Weill as composer allowed them to make an explicit connection to Brecht, and more generally to quasi-European conditions of production. In Chapter 2, I demonstrated Weill's particular status as a European modernist composer within the American press before his arrival. Working with Weill gave the Group legitimate access to something authentically non-American, in Clurman's words the possibility of a new work 'along the lines [Weill] had made known in Germany'.

It is important to note that the intentions and reasons for working on the project and doing so with Weill operate concurrently. The production was not the result of any one person wanting to do any one thing, but rather the meeting of a variety of similar but conflicting desires. For example, there is a risk of overvaluing the importance of *Schweik* as source material, since Crawford recalled they had also 'discussed [...] Beuchner's [sic] *Wozzek* [sic] and *The Captain of Koepenik* [sic] for general inspiration'.⁹⁸ There is a further danger of overestimating Weill's own importance to the Group. In the *New York Times* after the production closed, Harold Clurman confirmed the temporary closure of the Group Theatre, explaining:

The group [when it reforms] will devote much effort not merely to the reading of new plays through an intensive collaboration with playwrights in the manner adopted with Paul Green, whose "*Johnny Johnson*" came out of the Group Theatre's suggestion, stimulation and actual assistance.⁹⁹

Clurman makes no mention here of music, instead focusing on collaborative work written from scratch with a playwright (something that the Group had not attempted before *Johnny*).

In actual fact, the main facilitator of the early development period appears to have been Cheryl Crawford. In the limited literature available, this role is frequently referred to in parental terms. Crawford herself recalled that on securing further money for its production from philanthropist John Whitney, she was 'especially delighted because my baby [...] was going to have a

⁹⁸ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 94.

⁹⁹ Harold Clurman, 'The Group Halts, But Only to Think It Over', *New York Times*, 17 January 1937, p. 153.

chance'.¹⁰⁰ Clurman uses similar language, remembering that Paul Green, Weill and Crawford 'worked out the scenario together in fairly complete detail. It was a Group project in the full sense of the word. It was also Cheryl Crawford's adopted child.'¹⁰¹ In the Group actors' damning postproduction enquiry, they admitted that 'its creation by the Group, through Cheryl, was one of the most gratifying incidents in our entire experience.'¹⁰² Wendy Smith suggests: 'Crawford was, perhaps for the first time in her years with the Group, truly happy and fulfilled. Green and Weill adored her and gave her all the credit for making the project a reality.'¹⁰³ In her biography, Crawford noted: 'certainly this was the kind of work I really enjoyed, inspiring new work and being a part of their development.'¹⁰⁴ The implication that Crawford's role in the instigation of the project was parental is obviously problematic. In the circumstances, it reads as dismissive, with an insinuation of an overly emotional connection to a text that is beyond normal professional behaviour. Minimising Crawford's role in this way (or my suggestion that it is not accidental) was not only a contemporaneous problem. For example, in the 1990s, the *Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre's* chronology credited only Clurman and Lee as the founders of the Group theatre.¹⁰⁵

It is clear that Crawford had a significant role in the early production process. Smith suggests that she shielded both the writers from the news that Strasberg and Clurman did not want to go ahead with *Johnny*, and that they were actively seeking another script (which ultimately they were unable to find).¹⁰⁶ This, alongside the surviving letters between Crawford and Green, demonstrates that she was clearly pushing the collaboration forwards, through uncertainty on the other directors' parts and what appears to have been plain procrastination on the part of Green. In this first letter to Green, Crawford praises Weill's accomplishments: '[he] is not only a very talented

¹⁰⁰ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 96.

¹⁰¹ Clurman, *Fervent Years*, p. 184.

¹⁰² WLRC, TS Report of the Actors' Committee, p. 2.

¹⁰³ Smith, pp. 261-262.

¹⁰⁴ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 95.

¹⁰⁵ Felicia Hardison Londré, 'The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre (review)', *Theatre Journal*, 48 (1996), 394-395 (p. 395).

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *Real Life Drama*, pp. 263-264.

composer but an exceptionally brilliant theatre man as well. He believes that the script can be done in four or five weeks of steady collaborative work.¹⁰⁷ This becomes less likely though, as we see in a letter dated 11 May, a month later, when she encourages Green to write: 'don't worry in the first draft very much about the plot or character motivations, the final significance that we all want them to have, can be taken care of in the last draft.'¹⁰⁸ Crawford is clearly afraid that Green will not deliver on time: 'Please, please don't let anything stand in the way of your getting to work.'¹⁰⁹ In this undated letter, presumably also from May, she pleads with him, explaining why she is so worried:

The reason I am so anxious about this is not only on account of summer rehearsals but also because of Kurt. You see his lease is up on June 1 and nothing is keeping him here but the hope of working on the play as otherwise he would like to spend the summer in Paris where he has a little house. He remembers that you said you would send something every week and have a rough draft of one act by the end of this month and he fears you may have found difficulties. It would be extremely helpful to see if you could send even three pages of any scene that he might study its style and keeping busy thinking about it. Please try to do that this week and maybe you would also drop a note telling him how you're getting on.¹¹⁰

Weill's letters to Lenya, written while he was staying with Green and Crawford, support the idea that she played a major role in the early collaboration. Weill seemed uncertain of the playwright:

Paul Green is a strange fellow, and I'm not quite sure whether he's able to handle this project. But Cherill [*sic*] is terrific, and it's astonishing how much she understands. Anyway, it's interesting for me, and I think it's not impossible for something worthwhile to come out of this.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ WLRC, Photocopy, Cheryl Crawford to Paul Green, 10 April 1936, (Ser. 47 Crawford).

¹⁰⁸ WLRC, Photocopy, Cheryl Crawford to Paul Green, 11 May 1936 (Ser. 47 Crawford).

¹⁰⁹ Crawford to Green, 11 May 1936.

¹¹⁰ WLRC, Photocopy, Cheryl Crawford to Paul Green, undated [May 1936?] (Ser. 47 Crawford).

¹¹¹ Kurt Weill, '150. Weill in Chapel Hill to Lenya in New York, [6 May 1936]', in *Speak Low (when you speak love): the letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. by Lys Symonette and Kim Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp. 193-194 (p. 194).

His letter home the next day reinforced their relationship: 'Yesterday we made great progress in our work, and if he writes it the way Cherill [sic] and I have laid it out, it could turn out to be a fabulous play.'¹¹² Weill obviously enjoyed the collaborative work with Crawford. The fact that he shared credit with her for the dramatic structure was unlikely to have been any act of kindness on his part. The ongoing working relationship he had with Crawford after this production confirms Weill's respect and trust. Their connection reveals how collaborations work in practice. In this case, a practitioner is working outside of their traditional role: Crawford operated as a producer but also had a vital dramaturgical input. In the former role, she pushed the collaborators through the process, trying to ensure that writing was completed on time. In the latter role, she devised new material, and if Weill's version of events is accurate, even shaped how the play should be structured.

Paul Green's reasons for getting involved with the production are varied, but broadly relate to personal politics and a desire to find a new form of music theatre. The Group had already produced his script *The House of Connelly* in 1931, but *Johnny Johnson* was an original project. Green had personal connections to the subject matter of the play, and associated himself with the anti-war sentiments that Johnny expressed. Green had served in the USA Army in World War I, an experience he revealed to Harold Clurman:

On a visit to Chapel Hill to discuss a play about college life that Paul Green had submitted to us, I learned something about Paul's past that he had never before mentioned. He had fought overseas in the last war and had an intimate acquaintance with the American soldier of that day. I mentioned Kurt Weill's suggestion [for *The Good Soldier Schweik*], particularly since Paul was fascinated with the element of music in the theatre.¹¹³

Forty years after the collaboration, Green wrote to Cheryl Crawford as she was preparing to write her autobiography, presumably in response to a letter which had asked him to confirm her account of the origins of the project:

¹¹² Kurt Weill, '151. Weill in Chapel Hill to Lenya in New York, [7 May 1936]', in *Speak Low (when you speak love): the letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya*, ed. by Lys Symonette and Kim Kowalke (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), p. 194 (p. 194).

¹¹³ Clurman, *Fervent Years*, p. 184.

I don't know who got the idea for the play first. But to repeat, I know you were the spark-plug that kept firing off the whole thing. I know too that I have been an anti-war and pro-peace man for most of my life. Long, long ago I believe in Woodrow Wilson's idealism and I still do. Like Johnny, I listened to his speeches, and in the 'disordered time', as Anguish Howington described them in the play, I finally agreed with Wilson as to the war. It was a war to end war, to make the world safe for democracy. So I would step out and do my part. I enlisted and took up the gun to 'fight fire with fire.

The use of force to bring non-force didn't work, and I doubt it ever will. [...] *Johnny Johnson* then is a sort of morality play, an Everyman if you will. At least I intended it so.¹¹⁴

While Crawford's central role is once again established, the multiple intentions that impacted upon *Johnny* are also apparent. These are documented by the presence of multiple narratives: 'I wanted to do this' or 'it was about that'. These statements are often rooted in the author's perspective, without acknowledgement of those of the other collaborators. There is a particularly clear example of this in an essay published in *The English Journal* in 1949. In this article, Green discusses his artistic goals and his search for a form of theatre that would suit his purposes, something he called symphonic drama. He wrote that although he had tried several other descriptions, this one worked specifically because it was 'a "sounding-together" in the true meaning of the Greek term. The term seemed a little highfalutin, and that I deplored. But it was nearer what I wanted than anything else.'¹¹⁵ Green felt a close dramaturgical connection between what the playwright had to do and the task of composing, hence the allusion to symphony:

The whole body of the work must be kept propelling itself onward by means of the individual instrumentations which came forward to personal fulfilment, returned and gave place to others, and they in turn likewise. Motifs must be developed, thematic statements made and exploited, and a ferment of symphonic creativity must be kept brewing to self-realization.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Paul Green, '314. To Cheryl Crawford [Windy Oaks, Old Lystgra Road, Chapel Hill, N.C] 22 April 1975', in *A Southern Life: Letters of Paul Green, 1916-1981*, ed. by Laurence G Avery, The Fred W. Morrison series in Southern studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), pp. 683-684 (p. 683).

¹¹⁵ Green, 'Symphonic Drama', (p. 179).

¹¹⁶ Green, 'Symphonic Drama', (p. 178).

Green's desire for a coming together of music in the theatre and a play written like a symphony must have made working with Weill a particularly attractive choice. He recalled in the same essay that:

I tried this sort of symphonic drama a couple of other times on Broadway. Once the cool and loyal judgement of Cheryl Crawford, the enthusiasm of Harold Clurman and the Group Theatre, and the fine direction of Lee Strasburg and the resilient and theatrewise music of Kurt Weill - all helped to mend matters. But they were not enough, and *Johnny Johnson* likewise was marked down as a failure.¹¹⁷

The multiple accounts of *Johnny Johnson* cannot all be explained by unreliable witnesses. In reality, the production was an amalgamation of intentions and aspirations, which were worked out through a collaborative process. This was framed by conditions of production and reception, which I will now explore.

REHEARSALS

The conflicts that were a result of the Group's rejection of Broadway conditions of production and reception can be observed in almost every aspect of the experience of *Johnny Johnson*. Perhaps most obviously, they can be observed in the financial structure of the production and the Group as a whole. Paul Green's biographer, John Roper, helpfully summarises that 'the Group intended to be truly autonomous by avoiding debt to the major commercial investors in and backers of plays.'¹¹⁸ In 1936, Cheryl Crawford wrote an article for the Group which deals specifically with this issue. In it she discusses the contradiction money posed: the desire to show work in the same theatres as commercial productions necessitated finding the money to pay for them. She writes that:

Let's not kid around with the miraculous visitations of public grants and private subsidy. We have ways of getting money - from the radio and from the movies, if not from plays. The problem here is how to still be the Group and engage in either of these activities; to find a script that will suit our purposes and satisfy them.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Green, 'Symphonic Drama', (p. 182).

¹¹⁸ John Herbert Roper, *Paul Green: Playwright of the Real South* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2003), p. 155.

¹¹⁹ Crawford, 'Money', (p. 453).

As a whole, this article would suggest that the tasks of contemplating where money was going to come from, and then going out and getting it, were often left to Crawford. Her article is an attempt to show the Group that though financial issues might seem frustrating to the artistic ambitions of a theatre company, they were inseparable. In the case of *Johnny Johnson*, which she felt would be 'our most expensive production' with a budget of \$60,000, Crawford was able to secure two miraculous visitations.¹²⁰ Firstly, she recalls that Bess Eitingon, 'a wealthy woman enamoured of the theatre' and wife of fur dealer Motty, donated \$40,000 for the production.¹²¹ (Motty's firm, the Eitingon Schild Company, was in 1930 'the world's largest fur organization', importing fur from Russia, where Motty had himself escaped from in 1919.¹²² The company had reported losses throughout the 1930s, apart from this particular year, 1936.¹²³ In 1946 the company inevitably collapsed, owing \$7,500,000.¹²⁴ What other money Bess might have invested in Broadway theatre is, unfortunately, not recorded.) Crawford secured the rest of the budget from John Whitney, a total of \$20,000.¹²⁵ As I have already recorded, Crawford managed to save money on this budget by having Weill carry out his own orchestrations 'which saved money'.¹²⁶

Crawford clearly had two sets of tasks within this production: firstly as a dramaturg who facilitated the collaboration between Green and Weill; and secondly, in her role as producer, seeking financial backing to pay for the production (and chivvying the writers along). Jay Plum, in an article which considers Crawford's position in the Group, notes:

¹²⁰ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 94.

¹²¹ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 94.

¹²² 'Business: Fur Troubles', *Time*, 17 February 1930, reprinted at <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,738706,00.html>> [accessed 28 February 2010].

¹²³ Theodore H. Draper, 'Letters Page: 'The Mystery of Max Eitingon': An Exchange by Walter Laquer, Vitaly Rapoport, Stephen Schwartz, Reply by Theodore H. Draper', *The New York Review of Books*, 16 June 1988 <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/4396>> [accessed 28 February 2010].

¹²⁴ 'Big Fur Firm Files Petition; Debts are Estimated as High as \$7,500,000', *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 17 December 1946, p. 20.

¹²⁵ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 96.

¹²⁶ Crawford, *One Naked*, p. 94.

Her primary responsibilities included handling the Group Theatre's financial and business affairs, reading new scripts, scheduling rehearsals for new plays, and planning the summer retreats. In short, she performed the tasks that failed to interest her male collaborators, which could include the direction of plays.¹²⁷

Plum suggests that Crawford's position in the Group (and its division of labour) suggest that: 'despite its progressive rhetoric, the socially conscious Group Theatre reproduced systems of power and privilege that devalued difference.'¹²⁸ When Crawford was unable to continue the dramaturgical tasks due to the pressures of raising capital, a gap was left which no one else was prepared to fill. The Actors' Report paid particular attention to this handover:

Part of the reason why the script was not ready in time to use the valuable summer months was because it was not considered an immediate group endeavour until too late. It was a stepchild until time and circumstances placed us at their mercy. From here on we rode along without a functional script plan. Cheryl was finished with her end, and Harold did not take it over with efficient and timely vigour. Thus nobody was particularly responsible for discovering the laws and planning the necessary work on the script. This is a chronic fault.¹²⁹

All of the managerial functions which are necessary to the musical's method of production (for instance, the task of ensuring actors and musicians are rehearsed) appear to have been overlooked in the case of *Johnny Johnson*. The confusion over Crawford's role was exacerbated by the lack of direction. Smith records that Clurman 'hesitantly decided that he should direct', even though Crawford and Strasberg had doubts about his abilities.¹³⁰ Strasberg decided to support Clurman in his decision, and when Crawford called a meeting to 'express her concern', Strasberg 'shrugged and said, "What difference does it make who directs it?"'.¹³¹ Though Clurman did indeed start

¹²⁷ Jay Plum, 'Cheryl Crawford: One Not So Naked Individual', *Passing Performances: Queer Readings of Leading Players in American Theatre History*, ed. by Robert A. Schanke and Kim Marra (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998) pp. 239-261 (p. 251).

¹²⁸ Plum, (p. 252).

¹²⁹ WLRC, TS Report of the Actors' Committee, pp. 1-2.

¹³⁰ Smith, *Real Life Drama*, p. 276.

¹³¹ Smith, *Real Life Drama*, p. 276.

rehearsals during the summer camp, when the company left for Pine Brook, he 'relinquished the directorship to Lee Strasberg'.¹³²

This uncertain directorial control, and the resulting lack of any clear managerial hierarchy, meant that rehearsals appear to have been seriously undermined. They ran for 11 weeks, something which seems to have been substantial even in 1936, as the Actors' Report warned: 'We must guard against a long rehearsal period becoming an effete mannerism.'¹³³ The Report highlights an established set of values placed on different tasks that must be accomplished and were not. In this case, during rehearsals:

One of the things that always rushes the last two weeks is that our directors have made a habit of not staging the scenes until the very last minute. Staging too often in our shows is looked upon as a necessary chore to follow the creative work of the improvisation, etc, etc. (This goes especially for Harold). Much more work and much more definite work should be done earlier on the actual staging of the scenes within the stage layout to be used.¹³⁴

There are obvious practical concerns and consequences. The lack of certainty about the set means that rehearsals cannot operate within an actual layout. Though an actor complaining of being under-rehearsed is hardly unusual, it appears that actors were widely encouraged by Strasberg to 'work out independently his or her character's motivations and actions', as Smith notes:

The result was chaos and hard feelings: Actor A, having decided what the scene meant to him, thought Actor B had missed the point and was working in the wrong way. There had always been a certain amount of collective criticism during Group rehearsals, but the level of bitterness rose, a result of their terror over the lack of direction inside and outside the rehearsal hall.¹³⁵

Again, this received particular attention in the Report: 'several of the important parts in this production suffered greatly from no individual work.'¹³⁶ They go on to explain:

None of the parts were worked on organically from the point of view of spine, - through our methods of finding the active core of a

¹³² Kramer, (p. 53).

¹³³ WLRC, TS Report of the Actors' Committee, p. 2.

¹³⁴ [Emphasis in original.] WLRC, TS Report of the Actors' Committee, p. 3.

¹³⁵ Smith, p. 281.

¹³⁶ WLRC, TS Report of the Actors' Committee, p. 4.

character. Rather, Lee has taken to working through mood and quality, and juggling the actors' performances to fit the needs of the scenes at each moment.¹³⁷

The Report concluded: 'We feel it is because the directors don't want to close the gates of theatric [*sic*] inspiration in the act or to inhibit the stage freedom.'¹³⁸ Lehman Engel, musical director, recalled that, contrary to the normal method of rehearsing a musical, 'Many of the songs, in fact, were not assigned to specific actors until just before performances began. The whole cast learned and rehearsed the score.'¹³⁹

Many of the sources corroborate the idea that a clear, unwritten set of theatrical rules were not followed in the case of *Johnny Johnson*. The actors blamed mismanagement: Smith concludes that 'everywhere the committee looked in the production of *Johnny Johnson* they saw people's talents and enthusiasm wasted because there was no organized channel for them.'¹⁴⁰ This disorganisation also threatened the traditional managerial hierarchy. The director, who should nominally have been at the top of this ladder and entrusted with overseeing the process, apparently failed to carry out the tasks that the job demanded. Smith suggests that while Clurman was leading the project, he did not give designer Donald Oenslager proper instructions. Clurman 'believed in inspiring the artist's creativity rather than outlining specifically what he wanted'.¹⁴¹ Smith argues that Oenslager 'needed firmer guidance', but instead when the two met, Clurman 'rambled on about the charming, miniature quality the set should have, leaving Oenslager baffled by his remarks and totally in the dark as to his intentions.'¹⁴² Other figures operated outside of what might have been seen as their proper role, doing more than they were expected to, sometimes in a way that was detrimental to the production. Ronald Sanders's biography of Weill includes an anecdote presumably from musical director Lehman Engel himself:

¹³⁷ WLRC, TS Report of the Actors' Committee, p. 4.

¹³⁸ WLRC, TS Report of the Actors' Committee, p. 5.

¹³⁹ Kramer, (p. 54).

¹⁴⁰ Smith, *Real Life Drama*, p. 288.

¹⁴¹ Smith, *Real Life Drama*, p. 277.

¹⁴² Smith, *Real Life Drama*, p. 277.

During rehearsals, Weill hardly let the young conductor out of his sight. Engel was never to forget the many times that the composer stood right behind him calling tempos: “faster, faster!” he would cry in his German accent, and then, “no, slower!” Engel was made so nervous that, on the last night of rehearsals, Strasberg was to make a special point of going to him and saying: “Stop thinking of what somebody has told you about music. It is yours now. Give a performance!”¹⁴³

Weill inappropriately tried to control the musical direction of his work, rather than letting Engel get on his own tasks. This contrasts with Crawford’s necessary embracing of a dramaturgical role during the instigation of the project, where such intervention was productive.

All of the evidence I have looked at so far highlights that the process of collaboration was far more complicated than Weill deciding to recreate his German work, or Americanize anything. By removing Weill from the focus of the enquiry and treating him as one of a number of collaborators operating within a complex framework, a different picture emerges.

THE TRANSITION TO CONDITIONS OF RECEPTION

PERFORMANCE SPACE

The choice of performance venue seems to have been the most catastrophic decision made about *Johnny Johnson* and the most important in understanding its reception. This highlights the connection in my methodology between rehearsal and performance space. Ric Knowles argues: ‘The rehearsal hall, where the company works full days for what usually amounts to more than eighty percent of the creative process of mounting a production, is among the most formative of practitioner spaces in shaping meaning in the theatre.’¹⁴⁴ The Group Theatre rehearsed first at the summer camp, and then after their return to New York in the Belmont Theatre, a small auditorium with 500 seats.¹⁴⁵ It was a good match, as Smith notes: ‘[its] small-scale perfectly suited

¹⁴³ Ronald Sanders, *The Days Grow Short: The Life and Music of Kurt Weill* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), p. 230.

¹⁴⁴ Ric Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre: Theatre and Performance Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 67.

¹⁴⁵ This database is particularly useful for Broadway theatres that have been subsequently demolished. The Broadway League, *Belmont Theatre* | Internet

the intimate mood Clurman and Strasberg agreed the play required.¹⁴⁶ Harold Clurman recalled in his biography that in the Belmont 'the production seemed charming: informal, unpretentious and sweet.'¹⁴⁷ It would have been ideal as a performance venue, but the company were forced to move into a much larger space, the Forty-Fourth Street Theatre, 'one of the largest on Broadway'.¹⁴⁸ Clurman recalled that:

Our actors' voices sounded so small they were occasionally inaudible; Donald Oenslager's sets, which had been designed larger than I anticipated, now appeared monstrous; the performances now looked amateurish. In later years, when I explained some of the production's weaknesses as they betrayed themselves through the disproportionately large stage and theatre, people asked me with more impatience than commiseration: "Why did you take such a large house?" Take it! We had been shoved into it.¹⁴⁹

Clurman noted that the first two previews 'were the most distressing experiences I have ever gone through in the theatre.'¹⁵⁰ He goes on to explain why: 'the orchestra had not had sufficient time for rehearsals (dress rehearsals are costly). The actors were lost. After the first five minutes of the first preview half the audience left. By the end of the performance there were no more than twenty people in the auditorium.'¹⁵¹ He also linked the panic that resulted from the inappropriate new space to the shaping of the final performance text: 'Many of the musical numbers were cut - in a smaller theatre they need not have been - but what becomes most damaged in the process of saving a production in jeopardy is people's psyches.'¹⁵²

The move to a different theatre brought about practical dramaturgical consequences to the production such as fewer song numbers. In fact, Knowles suggests that each of the physical and technological factors of the performance

Broadway Database: The official source for Broadway Information,
<<http://www.ibdb.com/venue.php?id=1314>> [accessed 2 March 2010].

¹⁴⁶ Smith, *Real Life Drama*, p. 279.

¹⁴⁷ Clurman, *Fervent Years*, p. 188.

¹⁴⁸ Clurman, *Fervent Years*, p. 188.

¹⁴⁹ Clurman, *Fervent Years*, p. 188.

¹⁵⁰ Clurman, *Fervent Years*, p. 188.

¹⁵¹ Clurman, *Fervent Years*, p. 188-189.

¹⁵² Clurman, *Fervent Years*, p. 189.

space 'participates in specific discourses and brings its own discursive weight to bear on a production'.¹⁵³

Johnny Johnson in the Belmont is a different text to *Johnny Johnson* in the Forty-Fourth Street Theatre. For example, take acoustics as an architectural and technological feature unique to both theatres. The actors' voices (sung and spoken) in an era before radio-mikes unavoidably produce different kinds of meaning for an audience depending on the acoustic properties of the space. Some of these variations are obvious: what does it mean in a piece of music theatre to be unable to hear the song lyrics? Some are more complicated, especially those that link performance space and audience expectation. For example, there is a possibility that a larger theatre might create an audience expectation of professionalism, and an assumption that those singing will have a particular quality of voice. Phoebe Brand, who played Minnie Belle, recalled the production 'needed opera singers by the time it got on the 44th Street stage'.¹⁵⁴ As it was, the performance text that was ultimately presented had a different dramaturgical function because of its location.

In this case, the way the production was supposed to be heard changed: music that had been intended to operate in a certain way was also received differently as a consequence of the changed circumstance. In an interview with Weill about *Johnny Johnson*, the interviewer remarked to the composer: 'But what queer music for cannons! It seemed, with a few differences, to have been written in the same mood as Johnny's love song. Please explain.'¹⁵⁵ Weill's response (though he was admittedly unlikely to admit fault in his own work) was specifically related to the acoustics:

I'll have to drop in and see about the music; there are a lot of details involved in its execution, such as microphones and what not, and a small error is sufficient to spoil the entire effect. Maybe the music is done too fast. [...] The music should have been almost a lullabye [*sic*].¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Knowles, p. 69.

¹⁵⁴ Smith, *Real Life Drama*, p. 282.

¹⁵⁵ Ralph Winett, 'Composer of the Hour', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (New York, 20 December 1936), pp. 10, 12, <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/kurt-weill/further-reading/348-composer-of-the-hour>> [accessed 7 February 2009].

¹⁵⁶ Winett, 'Composer of the Hour'.

(Weill is referring presumably to a microphone over the stage or in the pit. Unfortunately little is known about microphone use in the 1930s.) Clearly then, trying to produce meaning from *Johnny Johnson* without acknowledging that the performance space was a fundamental factor is unproductive. Instead, addressing the particular conditions that establish a performance text is essential to any examination of questions of meaning.

PUBLIC AND CRITICAL RESPONSE

Unusually, because *Johnny Johnson* was subsequently produced by the Federal Theatre Project in Cleveland, Los Angeles, Boston, and New Orleans in March 1937, there are a few contemporary audience reactions (though obviously, to a different production). These were recorded in a report drafted after the event, which noted: 'The composer was most expressive of his pleasure in the production in spite of the fact that we did only a mediocre job of performing his music, and he was also most expressive of his pleasure in the production as a whole.'¹⁵⁷ The audience seemed to enjoy the subject of the musical, though were uncertain of the songs. I can only hope Weill never came across this particular example: 'The director has done a fine job in handling a rather difficult script and Kurt Weill's songs from the '*Dreigoschenoper*' were well adapted and directed (albeit none too well sung).'¹⁵⁸

Since there is so rarely documentation of the public discourse around a performance to go on, the critical response can seem like the most valuable evidence of a performance text (as opposed to a script or score). Theatre critics tend to be trusted as reliable witnesses, especially in cases where so little of the production text survives. Their responses, though, are as qualified by their context as any other material evidence. In this example, the majority of critics unquestioningly accept the conditions of reception, and the conditions of production are taken for granted. The likelihood that the production was in a disproportionately large theatre is not commented on, since the critics can only review it where they see it. The meaning that is documented in the

¹⁵⁷ WLRC, Photocopy, TS fol. Federal Theatre – Johnny Johnson – *Works Progress Administration Production Book* Original at Washington, Library of Congress, Music Division, TS fol. Production Title File 1934-39, Box 1926 "Production Bulletin – 1937", Section II.

¹⁵⁸ *Works Progress Administration Production Book*, Section XI.

reviews is entirely framed by the method of production: public discourse cannot exist independently apart from it. They do, however, allow a view into how the contemporaneous audience might have produced meaning from the production itself.

In the case of *Johnny Johnson*, though I have already established the particular tension created by the Group Theatre's rejection of accepted conditions of production, little of this is documented in the reviews. There is an exceptionally large sample of reviews in the Group's scrapbook, which has preserved a variety of responses from the *Theatre Arts Monthly* to the *Midweek Pictorial*.¹⁵⁹

Within these reviews are frequent remarks to Weill's reputation as a European modernist. *Time* announced that credit was due to 'Composer Weill for the weird, haunting little ballads and Europeanized fox trots which immensely help to articulate the play.'¹⁶⁰ Marc Blitzstein's review, which I will address in more depth shortly, directly connects the music with Weill's earlier work, noting that 'the song of the goddess of Liberty, the one called Soldiers, Masters, Men, the comic one on psychiatry are in their way quite as fine as the Barbarasong or Surabaya Johnny.'¹⁶¹ Weill's particular position and status seems to grant him permission to engage with jazz:

He is one of the few contemporary musicians who can think in the jazz idiom without debasement, managing at once to avoid the pretentiousness of George Gershwin, the falsity of Irving Berlin, and the sleek precocity of Cole Porter. [...] To him must go much of the critic's applause.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ WLRC, Photocopy, Group Theatre Scrapbook vols 1-19, 21-29, Ser 50 A/J6 fol. 971016. Unfortunately, this tends to mean there is little information about the source itself, particularly with regard to date and page number. A copy of the scrapbook is kept in the WLRC, it is not paginated and comprises at least a ream of paper. In order to reference this material, I have quoted any information provided alongside the cutting. Where it has been possible to source articles from their original publications, I have done so. In future examples it will be abbreviated as 'Group Theatre Scrapbook'.

¹⁶⁰ WLRC, Photocopy, TS "New Plays in Manhattan", *Time*, 30 November 1936, fol. Johnny Johnson Production File.

¹⁶¹ Marc Blitzstein, 'In the Theatre: Weill Scores for Johnny Johnson', *Modern Music*, XIV.2 (November-December 1936), 44-46 (p. 44).

¹⁶² Group Theatre Scrapbook: 'War and Peace', *NY Teacher*, Jan 1937, n.p..

This quote reveals that the kinds of value judgements I have already examined in *Modern Music* were replicated in the mainstream press. It would appear that being European gives Weill a kind of cultural legitimacy.

In contrast, the *New York Woman* tries to prepare its readers for what might be a shocking experience: 'Kurt Weill's music may jar you when sung in the male chorus tradition of musical comedy, the sudden leap from cannons chanting doom to a burlesque take-off on psychiatrists may upset you.'¹⁶³ In fact many of the critics respond to Weill's music by attempting to explain it to their readers. John Anderson argues: 'sometimes this is effective and sometimes it is merely irrelevant and intrusive. It makes the show as spotty as a Dalmatian hound.'¹⁶⁴ *Newsweek* censures the presence of so much music: 'Although Kurt Weill's charming musical score establishes the atmosphere, at times it impedes the action. The dialogue is so good that satirical lyrics add nothing to the interpretation of the plot nor the delineation of the characters.'¹⁶⁵ (This review reveals an expectation of how song was supposed to operate within the drama in 1936, years before *Oklahoma!*, once again proving that the integrated narrative is not an accurate reflection of American musical theatre's history).

Other critics tried to explain the music's function to their readers, often referencing Weill's earlier work. Joseph Wood Krutch noted the link to *Dreigroschenoper*, making the somewhat contradictory remark that 'even to my untrained ear the new music is original in the same immediately recognizable way.'¹⁶⁶ Krutch tries to explain why Weill appears to use different kinds of music:

Superficially, Weil [*sic*] seems to employ with almost equal facility any one of the idioms of popular music. He writes things which sound like military marches, popular ballads, or jazz tunes. But what he is really writing is some sort of mordant commentary on each. Whichever

¹⁶³ Group Theatre Scrapbook: no headline, *New York Woman*, 2 December 1936, n.p..

¹⁶⁴ Group Theatre Scrapbook: John Anderson, 'John Anderson Reviews *Johnny Johnson* at 44th St Theatre', *New York Journal*, 20 November 1936, n.p..

¹⁶⁵ Group Theatre Scrapbook: "'Johnny Johnson': Group Theatre Presents Paul Green's War Legend', *Newsweek*, section Entertainment, 28 November 1936, p. 19.

¹⁶⁶ WLRC, Photocopy, TS, Joseph Wood Krutch, 'Drama: Fool of God', *The Nation*, n.d., n.p. fol. Johnny Johnson Production File.

manner he seems to have adopted is always somehow subtly perverted so that instead of lulling with the familiar it stirs one with a strange uneasiness.¹⁶⁷

Robert Benchley also addressed how different types of music were used. He explained the function of the large amount of incidental music in the piece, noting that it 'seems to be slightly out of place and then, gradually, becomes an integral part of the whole crazy quilt through its very irrelevance.'¹⁶⁸

Marc Blitzstein's review in the pages of *Modern Music* was a radical rethinking of the way in which Weill's music operated within the drama. (It was also a recantation of Blitzstein's previous position.) He led with the statement: 'I have written some harsh things in the past about Kurt Weill and his music. I wish now to write a few good things. He hasn't changed, I have.'¹⁶⁹ It was a broadly enthusiastic review, although Blitzstein did note that *Johnny's* narrative was problematic, especially with regard to character development: 'The play misses because of deep confusion in the poet's mind as to just where real sanity such as Johnny displays would lead him.'¹⁷⁰

The central thrust of his argument echoed Benchley's response to Weill's music, that it seemed initially slightly out of place. Blitzstein admitted: 'I have formerly complained about Weill's banality, even his insipidity. I see now that triteness in a work of Weill is curiously not bad, but good. Weill deliberately tries for it – for the familiar turn, for the easy supine harmonies.'¹⁷¹ Though he found 'plenty of trite music in the new score'¹⁷², Blitzstein was able to suggest a theory as to why: 'I think he feels that certain ways of being expressive never die; and I think he believes he can crack open, make plastic, even re-form a mould which has hardened in memory for other composers.'¹⁷³ He argues

¹⁶⁷ Krutch, 'Drama: Fool of God'.

¹⁶⁸ Group Theatre Scrapbook: Robert Benchley, 'The Theatre - good material', *New Yorker*, 1 December 1936, n.p..

¹⁶⁹ Blitzstein, p. 44.

¹⁷⁰ Blitzstein, p. 44.

¹⁷¹ Blitzstein, p. 45.

¹⁷² Blitzstein, p. 45.

¹⁷³ Blitzstein, p. 45.

that 'Weill's utter "corniness" is in a way terribly sophisticated; he writes a piece which is the last word in the style of that kind.'¹⁷⁴

Blitzstein is also concerned with the dramatic structure that Weill is presenting: 'I wonder if the music critics [...] will notice that Weill has practically added a new form to the musical theatre.'¹⁷⁵ It is this aspect which is of the most interest to Blitzstein: he uses the example of the scene with the Sergeant attempting to train Johnny, and as he starts speaking 'music insinuates itself into his speech, and his enumeration of the manoeuvres gains momentum and dash by becoming rhythmical and percussive.'¹⁷⁶ Blitzstein argues: 'This almost elementary, uninhibited use of music, seemingly careless, really profoundly sensitive, predicts something new for the theatre.'¹⁷⁷

The apparently new function for music in drama that Blitzstein proposes is supported by Weill's own description of his work:

In our time theatre-music is far more important than absolute music. [...] As for me, I need a subject before I can compose. I've never just taken a libretto and made music to it. It must be a libretto I believe in. That is why the music of "*Johnny Johnson*" is so integral a part of the play--why such unity has been achieved. The collaboration between Paul Green and myself was perfect.¹⁷⁸

The subject of integrated music and drama also appears in other reviews. An unsigned article in *Theatre Arts Monthly* reserved its praise for Green, who it said had 'almost succeeded in his endeavour to unite dramatic action and speech with music, not using the music as an envelope for the action but as an integral part of the play and a companion to the spoken word.'¹⁷⁹ The music was, it claimed, 'very successful at its best, but unequal providing the actors both with their richest opportunities and with their most difficult hurdles.'¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁴ Blitzstein, p. 45.

¹⁷⁵ Blitzstein, p. 45-46.

¹⁷⁶ Blitzstein, p. 46.

¹⁷⁷ Blitzstein, p. 46.

¹⁷⁸ Winett, 'Composer of the Hour'.

¹⁷⁹ WLRC, Photocopy, '(No title given), *Theatre Arts Monthly*, n.d., p. 426' fol. *Johnny Johnson* Production File (Original from Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Library, Southern Historical Collection, Paul Green Papers fol. #3693).

¹⁸⁰ Group Theatre Scrapbook: '(untitled)', *Theatre Arts Monthly*, n.d., p. 426.

As the previous example demonstrates, many of the reviews depend strictly on a literal writer as author ideology (i.e. Weill's role in the collaboration is underestimated). Though Weill himself calls attention to the collaboration with Green, many of the reviews are only able to focus on one named author. This figure varies: in most of the reviews it is Paul Green, but in publications that are primarily concerned with musicological analysis Weill becomes the focus. Brooks Atkinson, writing in the *New York Times*, considers Paul Green as the author. Atkinson calls *Johnny* 'Mr Green's work', and concludes: 'Although Mr Green is an honest and exultant poet, he is not a virtuoso theatre man.'¹⁸¹ Weill is, if anything, a contributor: Green has 'written songs for every scene' and Weill has 'set them to robust music'.¹⁸² Ultimately, Atkinson's review is inconclusive, stating: 'It is part fantasy, part musical satire, part symbolic poetry in the common interests of peace; and also one is compelled to add, part good and part bad, since new forms cannot be created overnight.'¹⁸³

Atkinson also hints at *Johnny Johnson* being a new form of theatre, although he does not clarify exactly why. He notes the anti-war message: 'people who believe that plays should be written about intelligent anti-war themes who also relish experiments in form have something to be thankful for this morning.'¹⁸⁴ Perhaps most importantly for Atkinson, the play was 'the first departure from polite mediocrity of the season'.¹⁸⁵ Like several other critics, Atkinson was able to develop his position in a second review. *The Literary Digest* explained these second opinions: 'Curiously, by last week most of the fourteen First Line critics had gone back to "*Johnny Johnson*" voluntarily, most of them had written second reports, confessing themselves "haunted" by certain aspects of the play.'¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Brooks Atkinson, 'Paul Green's "*Johnny Johnson*" opens a new season for the Group Theatre', *New York Times*, 20 November 1936, p. 26.

¹⁸² Atkinson, 'Johnny Johnson', p. 26.

¹⁸³ Atkinson, 'Johnny Johnson', p. 26.

¹⁸⁴ Atkinson, 'Johnny Johnson', p. 26.

¹⁸⁵ Atkinson, 'Johnny Johnson', p. 26.

¹⁸⁶ Group Theatre Scrapbook: "Haunting Drama, Critics and Audiences Can't Forget War Play, "*Johnny Johnson*", *The Literary Digest*, 2 January 1937, p. 23'.

Atkinson gave a little more consideration to Weill as a collaborator, examining Paul Green's 'fantastic legend' and its 'counterpoint of biting music by Kurt Weill'.¹⁸⁷ He criticises the 'slender uninflected story' but suggests that Weill's 'trenchant and brilliantly orchestrated score has a great deal of strength to give to "*Johnny Johnson*" when Mr Green's cartoon composition is weakest'.¹⁸⁸ Ultimately, and it is worth noting this article is entitled 'What the Youth Dare to Do', Atkinson credits the success of *Johnny* to its conditions of production:

In spite of its very obvious theatre frailties "*Johnny Johnson*" is an original and, at its best, a deeply moving piece of work. Only a young acting organisation in reduced circumstances would have enthusiasm and enterprise enough to put it on.¹⁸⁹

This review is the closest to any actual acknowledgement connecting performance text and the particular circumstances of its production. The majority of responses are only concerned with what is presented on the stage and, with slightly less importance, how it is presented. This does not mean that they are not valuable sources, but highlights how unreliable they are in documenting the kind of conflict and tension that I have observed in the production process of *Johnny Johnson*.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have examined two major assumptions that Bruce Kirle makes in his critical assessment of Kurt Weill. The first was that Weill was attempting to Americanise epic theatre. The far more complex picture that has emerged through this investigation reveals some significant problems with this idea. Weill was developing a response to the specific conditions of Broadway theatre, a process that *Johnny Johnson* was part of, but only one step along the way. Furthermore, *Johnny* was a product of compromise, each of the multiple collaborators had their own intentions and aspirations, in order for the project to happen at all a balance necessarily had to be found.

¹⁸⁷ Brooks Atkinson, 'What the Youth Dare to Do: '*Johnny Johnson*' by the Group Theatre and '200 Were Chosen' by the Actors Repertory Company as Examples of Enterprise', *New York Times*, 29 November 1936, section Drama-Screen-Music-Art-Radio, p. X1.

¹⁸⁸ Atkinson, 'What the Youth'.

¹⁸⁹ Atkinson, 'What the Youth'.

This brings us to Kirle's second assumption, Weill as author. Much of Kirle's argument is based on the principle that Weill was the driving figure in his own creative output. In order to challenge this I have examined the collaborative process from the perspective of multiple authors. This has meant stepping aside from the signature practices that have traditionally dominated ways of thinking about musical theatre. Thinking about the production process in this way has had several practical consequences. It has allowed us to call attention to the relationships Weill had with Crawford and Green. Though the evidence relating to Crawford's contribution to the project was largely in the public domain already (in Weill's published letters to Lenya) it had been concealed by the traditional emphasis on single authors and specific roles. By moving outside of her role as a producer, Crawford had a significant impact on the shaping of the performance text, a role that Weill himself appreciated. Though there is not much contemporary material that relates to the collaboration between Green and Weill, what does exist is particularly convincing. Weill in his 1936 essay for *Stage* puts particular hope in Green. He suggests that Green had 'already grappled with the problem of musical theatre himself' and the concept the playwright had come up with 'amazingly resembled the one I had worked out in Europe.'¹⁹⁰ Weill goes on to explain that:

From the day I visited him in north Carolina to discuss the idea of a musical play, my convictions have grown stronger and stronger that, in the rich musical quality of his speech, in the simple human approach of his theme, in the true folk humour of his characters, and in the beauty of his poetry, all the conditions for the creation of a new musical theatre stand ready.¹⁹¹

To reiterate, Weill is referring to a kind of theatre in which song is acknowledged as 'an exalted medium of expression and as an intrinsic feature of dramaturgy' a condition that he suggests he had already worked out in Europe. ¹⁹² Both Green and Crawford would figure significantly in the

¹⁹⁰ Kurt Weill, 'The Alchemy of Music: Music may be the ingredient that will transmute the play into living theatre', *Stage*, 14.2 (November 1936), pp 63-64 <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/the-alchemy-of-music>> [accessed 10 January 2009].

¹⁹¹ Weill, 'The Alchemy of Music'.

¹⁹² Weill, 'The Alchemy of Music'.

following years for Weill, and he would work with each of them on several further projects. Weill's relationship with the Group theatre also provided practical connections to Hollywood through Clifford Odets, and to Maxwell Anderson. By letting go of a strictly narrative account of the collaboration, it is possible to see a more detailed picture. I have reframed how meaning was produced in the case of *Johnny Johnson*, and more accurately understood Weill's negotiation of entry in practice. Weill's contribution is still distinct; it is still possible to observe how he finds ways of working in his new surroundings.

CONCLUSION

In this conclusion, I will consider the major findings of my research, and establish the implications of the thesis. In applying my methodology to a number of different case studies I have revealed Weill's working practices and demonstrated his engagement with conditions of production in the USA. I have uncovered how Weill's own description of the 'composer as dramatist' facilitates an understanding of his own collaborations. Adorno, in his concept of the *Musikregisseur*, suggests that Weill can be seen to operate as a director who uses music as his medium. In this thesis, I have refined his concept in the context of the evidence, and as a result propose the following: Weill is a collaborative practitioner who uses music as his medium, who engages with the conditions of production and reception through which a performance text is produced. I have also documented how Weill negotiated entry into American art worlds, in particular Broadway theatre. This has revealed Weill's manipulation of his own cultural capital in the media, and his careful management of economic assets and social capital.

I will address three specific conclusions that have emerged from the application of the methodology. Firstly, I will explore the concept of Weill as a 'composer as dramatist', who accepts and responds to conditions of production and reception in exile. Secondly, I will address the implication of considering Weill as a collaborative practitioner: Weill's actions in negotiating entry into American cultural industries reveal romanticised notions of the composer to be fictional. Thirdly, I will reflect on the finding that Weill reveals the musical's method of production as a series of complex collaborative processes which rely on the labour of multiple and often unaccredited agents. I will also consider the broader importance of this thesis for Weill studies and for musical theatre.

I have located Weill as a collaborative practitioner who explicitly addresses and recognises conditions of production and reception in exile. Weill saw conditions of artistic production to be entirely necessary to any collaborative

work. In this article, Weill discusses how the collaborative process is facilitated by what others have viewed as restrictions or limitations:

So-called artistic freedom is something special. The creative artist seeks independence, he wants to conceive his work freely, unaffected by outer compulsion. On the other hand, he needs some restraining influence to prevent his wandering in abstract spheres. He must know for whom he is creating. Only by considering his objective will he find the necessary spiritual background that prohibits an empty play with forms. Most great works of art were produced as commissions, for a definite purpose and audience, that is, between the millstones of outer compulsion and inner freedom, between “must” and “will.”¹

Weill describes what he sees as a requirement for any artistic work, that it be produced for a ‘definite purpose and audience’. In this thesis, I have demonstrated how Weill was willing to think about the suitability of the performance text for its audience (though as the case of *Opera from Mannheim* shows, he may not have always been right). Weill clearly saw this kind of recognition as not only essential but, as is demonstrated in the above quotation, entirely beneficial to creative production. He clearly believed that acknowledging the exigencies of production and reception (to echo Savran) defines the nature of making music theatre. Weill takes on what the context and tradition of the musical’s method of production offers as well as understanding the pre-production conditions which shape his collaborations.

Weill’s recognition of these conditions has previously been seen as inappropriate for a proper composer; Weill is seen to make improper concessions to Broadway which ultimately reduce his autonomy and detract from the quality and value of his work there. Adorno, for example, rather disparagingly suggests that Weill made such concessions as if they were little more than a ‘Test des Könners’, a test of his ability.² Drew argues that ‘collective criticism and amendment’ on Broadway meant that ‘once aesthetic criteria had been subordinated, no musical idea, however inspired, was defensible for its own sake if it could be shown to conflict with any of the

¹ Kurt Weill, The Future of Opera in America, *Modern Music*, 14.4 (May-June 1937), pp. 183-188

² Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Kurt Weill – Musiker des epischen Theaters’, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 15 April 1950, unpublished trans. by Jeremy Sams, 2008.

collective interests of the team.’³ Weill’s work in exile reveals many of the concepts around cultural production to be romanticised ideas which stamp an imagined autonomy over what is, in reality, a more complex process of negotiation between multiple agents and conditions.

Weill frequently addressed the idea that concessions to Broadway are necessarily damaging, he explained that:

Do we have to make concessions to Broadway? Personally I don’t think we have to do it, for the audiences are willing to accept any musical language so long as it is strong and convincing. On the other hand I cannot see any harm in making such concessions. Certainly it would be much healthier for an American musical theatre to make certain concessions to Broadway showmanship than to cater to a traditional opera form which is European in concept and purpose. The important concessions to Broadway are of a practical nature: limitation in the size of orchestra and chorus, and limitation in the size of leading singing parts. But in the history of the arts, such limitations have often brought very excellent results because they represent a challenge to the imagination and the skill of the creative artist.⁴

I would propose that what are termed concessions here could more accurately be called the recognition of Broadway conditions (to remove the pejorative implications that are clearly not present in Weill’s own position). Weill felt strongly that recognising the ‘limitations’ or requirements of Broadway facilitated the production of the kind of work he wanted to be involved in. In 1947, Weill explained why he felt what he was working towards, a new kind of music theatre which was ‘a part of the living theatre of our time’, could only be achieved on Broadway:

It has all the technical and intellectual equipment for a serious musical theatre. It has a wealth of singers who can act, excellent orchestras and conductors, music-minded directors, choreographers and designers. Above all, it has audiences as sensitive and receptive as any audiences in the world.⁵

³ David Drew, ‘Weill, Kurt (Julian)’ in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), vol. 20 Virelai-Zywny, pp. 300-310 (p. 308).

⁴ Kurt Weill, ‘Broadway and the Musical Theatre’, *The Composer’s News-Record*, no. 2 (May 1947), p. 1.

⁵ Weill, ‘Broadway and the Musical Theatre’.

Weill believed that the new music theatre he was proposing relied on the acceptance of such conditions: 'Broadway represents the living theatre in this country, and an American opera, as I imagined it, should be a part of the living theatre.'⁶ This theatre, he went on 'like the products of other opera-civilizations, appeal to large parts of the audience. It should have all the necessary ingredients of a "good show".'⁷ Weill dismisses established cultural hierarchies, moving freely between art worlds and cultural products. He sees the recognition of conditions of production and reception to be the defining features of music theatre, and the processes of making that theatre. Weill recognises that the exigencies of production and reception, (to echo Savran again) actually define music theatre that engages with and reaches its audience.

During his years in the USA, Weill engaged with multiple kinds of performance practices, as he had done in Germany. I have already examined his work in Hollywood and on Broadway, and in various types of theatre. After *Johnny Johnson*, Weill worked in a range of forms including radio opera, song cycles, world fair performances, and a variety of pageants. The next musical he collaborated on, *Knickerbocker Holiday*, centred on early American history in the beginnings of New York City and the formation of government. From *Johnny* onwards, many of Weill's projects feature American narratives, and he was clearly looking for more material on these themes. One of several collections of his planned ideas, a typewritten draft dated July 1937, records a variety of Americana including plans for 'Legendary Heroes' such as Davy Crockett and Johnny Appleseed, songs for the Fourth of July and Columbus Day, and the brief note suggesting 'Immigrant's Song Ellis Island'.⁸ Although I have focused in this thesis on Weill's negotiation of entry into the art world of Broadway commercial theatre, the commitment to American narratives Weill undertakes on arrival takes places across multiple forms. His response to

⁶ Kurt Weill, 'Liner Notes for the Original Cast Recording of *Street Scene*, released 1947, Columbia Masterworks set M-MM-683 (six 78 rpm discs) <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/liner-notes-for-the-original-cast-recording-of-qstreet-sceneq>> [accessed 22 July 2010].

⁷ Weill, 'Liner Notes'.

⁸ Yale University, Irving S. Gilmore Library, TS *Plan for a series of radio operas*, MSS no. 30, Series No. VII A.1, box no. 68 fol. no 13.

multiple kinds of conditions of production and reception, and of types of performance texts, can be seen in his response to the war effort. In this letter to Ira Gershwin, Weill documents the sheer range of his activities:

I spent some time in Chicago and made an album of records with Helen Hayes for Victor. I took the words of "America", "The Star Spangled Banner" and "Battlehymn of the Republic" and wrote a musical setting for them, based on the original tunes, but dramatising the words for Helen's reading. On the fourth side we took one of my Walt Whitman songs ("Beat! Beat! Drums!") which Helen speaks in rhythm [*sic*] of the music. It is very exciting and probably the most interesting example of combining poetry and music. The records will be out in a few weeks. The Whitman songs will also be recorded by John Charles Thomas. The song I wrote with Archibald MacLeish is being printed now and will be on the air soon, I hope. With Oscar Hammerstein I wrote some songs. One of them, "The Good Earth", is quite good. [...] I started a big vegetable garden and I do some work in Civilian Defense [*sic*] and as an air spotter.⁹

Weill's engagement with the exigencies of production and reception of the musical facilitates his ability to work across forms. It demonstrates how capable Weill was at understanding the conditions of multiple forms and art worlds.

Weill spoke passionately and frequently about his commitment to American cultural production, and what he felt this could lead to. Some of the comments he makes in this area reflect culturally imperialist thinking in Weill's description of the USA in comparison to Europe:

All these signs indicate that the soil is favourable for development. What will grow on it is hard to say, for there is no sort of tradition. The general public, outside of the large cities knows little or nothing about opera, but they tell me that the travelling troupes giving Verdi performances have had great success, and I am convinced that the radio, which is an important influence in this country, will do profitable preparatory work.¹⁰

⁹ Washington, Library of Congress, Performing Arts Library, TS, 'Kurt Weill to Ira Gershwin, (Brook House, New City, May 2 1942)' George and Ira Gershwin Papers

¹⁰ Kurt Weill, 'The Future of Opera in America', *Modern Music*, XIV.4 (May-June 1937), 183-18 in <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/the-future-of-opera-in-america>> [accessed 10 January 2009].

Nonetheless, Weill felt that the music theatre development which had begun in Europe (the opening of opera to a wider audience) could continue in America, if the conditions of production and reception were recognised:

I do not believe that America can simply take up this music theatre development right where Europe left off. The prerequisites for artistic construction here are quite different. But I do believe that a movement has already begun which runs parallel to the European and which will come closer to the goal we set in Europe, even though--or because--it develops on a new plane fixed by conditions in this country.¹¹

There are of course implications to understanding Weill as a collaborative practitioner: Weill's actions in negotiating entry into American cultural industries, and the method of production he engaged in, reveals romanticised notions of the composer to be fictional. This is the case for Weill as a composer of art music and as a composer for musical theatre.

In this thesis, I have found that Weill's openness over labour has provoked a discomfort within the critical discourse. Weill is seen as a workman, who evidently takes on time consuming tasks which have been previously considered less creative and therefore less important than artistic activity (that is to say, skilled labour professions rather than those which are perceived to be gifted ability). Weill openly presents his activities, he does not feel the need to represent his own working practices as somehow exceptional (as in the case of Korngold, who projects a narrative of his own artistic work as special, and as more artistic than other Hollywood composers). Weill rejects the idea that collaboration, or recognition of external conditions detract from the quality of the finished product. Weill's collaborative work in America demonstrates the fiction of ideas of autonomy in music and music theatre production and of inspired creativity over labour.

I have found that Weill carefully intervenes to develop his own reputation in the press; for example, in the representation of *Mahagonny* in the American press, Weill deliberately and repeatedly uses his work in order to improve his cultural capital. Weill was extremely concerned with the distribution of his

¹¹ Kurt Weill, 'The Future of Opera in America', *Modern Music*, XIV.4 (May-June 1937), 183-18 in <<http://www.kwf.org/kwf/the-future-of-opera-in-america>> [accessed 10 January 2009].

music; its commercial popularity was, as Charles Hamm notes, 'a yardstick by which to measure his music's reception and dissemination outside the theatre.'¹² Weill does not connect money and financial success to any sense of artistic or creative compromise. He denies the artificial projection of autonomy as any kind of desirable state from the very beginning of his creative practice in America. Weill's practice reveals these mythologised notions, which have dogged his critical reception, to be false. I have followed Weill's engagement in musical theatre's method of production, a process which has been exposed as a series of complex collaborative processes, relying on the labour of multiple and often uncredited agents.

The findings of this thesis have clear implications for Weill studies and for musical theatre. For the former, this approach moves away from a tight focus on the composer as a practitioner, and instead sets this contribution within a broader understanding of the processes through which the musical is produced and performed. I have established in the case of *Johnny Johnson*, that focusing on Weill at the expense of a proper consideration of the collaboration as a whole, is like listening to one half of a conversation. Weill's perceived contribution is actually diminished by not addressing him within the wider framework in which he is participating.

There are wider implications for musical theatre. Firstly, I have found that it is necessary to move beyond a limited focus on the text as a finished object, or as a performed object (text-as-event) into an understanding which acknowledges the musical's method of production. Secondly, my findings necessitate the revision of a historiography which has relied on ideas of artistic ownership and creativity, so that we might instead recognize the musical to be an essentially collaborative form with the participation of multiple agents. Many of these agents have traditionally been hidden on the grounds that their work is not considered to be creative, or as the case of Cheryl Crawford shows, their contributions have been diminished on grounds such as gender. Unpicking the misrecognition that signature practices have resulted in will require the

¹² Charles Hamm, 'Popular Adaptations of Weill's Music for Stage and Screen, 1927-1950' in *Popular Adaptations: 1927-1950*, ed. by Charles Hamm, Elmar Juchem and Kim H. Kowalke, 4.2 (New York: Kurt Weill Foundation for Music and European American Music Corporation, 2009), pp. 39-85 (p. 41).

acknowledgement of a collaborative practice that relies on the labour of large numbers of agents. This work should reveal the assumptions which the musical's dominant historiography has relied on, and instead, properly address the processes which I have started to reveal.

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